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The Translation of Elijah.

ETHEREAL yet visible; for, bright Unto intensity through purest light Indwelling, was that chariot of the sides. The horses, too, were creatures not of earth; Their necks were clothed with thunder; and their eyes Starry with beauty, told of heavenly birth. No harness fettered them; no curb nor girth Restrained the freedom of those glorious ones, Nor traces voked the chariot at their heels: It followed them, as planets follow suns Through trackless space, in their empyreal courses; For lo! the fiery spirit of the horses Was as a mighty presence in the wheels, And in the dazzling whirlwind which behind them flew And caught Elijah up, as sunlight drinks the dew. Away, away to Heav'n those steeds upbore him; Leaving the clouds as dust beneath their feet. Wide open flashed the golden gates before him; And angel forms of splendour rose to greet The favoured prophet. Oh, the rapture sweet! The ecstacy most thrilling which came o'er him! But thoughts are voiceless when we soar thus high; And, like the lark that vainly strives to beat

With little wings the air and pierce the sky, We fall again to earth. Elisha there Wept o'er his loss, but wept not in despair. No; though a few regretful tear-drops fell, He knew that with Elijah all was well; For through the open gates of Heaven there rang Strains of the song of welcome that the angels sang. O who can picture that transcendent sight! Who fitly can relate the wondrous story! Who paint the aërial beauty of that night Or sing the fleetness of those steeds of glory And God's triumphant chariot of light Entering Heaven! Never in depth or height Had mortal gazed on such a scene before; Never shall years, how long soe'er their flight, The solemn grandeur of that hour restore Till the last thunder echoes "It is done!" And the archangel, dazzling as the sun, Descends to earth; and, standing on the shore Of ages, swears with upraised hand by ONE Who lived ere time its cycles had begun, That time shall be no more.

CANTO XII.

Elijah the Prophet.

Epic Yoem,

G. WASHINGTON MOON,

Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, Author of "The Bean's English."

THE WAY

Wondon:
HATCHARD AND CO., 187, PICCADILLY,
Booksellers to B.B.H. the Princess of Wales.
1866.

Aorwich: Printed by Fletcher and Son. "Fet the words of my month, and the meditation of my beart, be acceptable in Thy sight, & Ford, my Strength and my Bedeemer."—Psalm xix, 14.

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PREFACE.

I have undertaken a somewhat difficult task; perhaps an ambitious one.—I have chosen as the subject for a poem, the history of that prophet who has appropriately been styled "the grandest and most "romantic character Israel ever produced";* the stirring incidents of his life I have endeavoured to relate in the highest description of verse,—the sacred epic; and the stanza which I have selected as the vehicle for my thoughts, while it is the most beautiful, is also the most intricate we possess,—the Spenserian. But, remembering what the Rev. Charles Kingsley wisely says should be the aim of every true poet; namely, not only "to write about that "which concerns all men," but "to write in language which all "men can understand"; I have been studiously careful to employ the simplest forms of expression, consistent with the dignity of the

^{*} Dr. Stanley's 'Sinai and Palestine', p. 325.

subject. Indeed, I shall not be surprised if, in the judgment of some of my readers, I shall be thought to have carried this simplicity of language a little too far. But this has to be said in its favour;—should the poem become a household book; as, from the general interest in the life of the mightiest of the prophets, I venture to hope it may; then, the very simplicity of its language will render it acceptable to a much larger portion of its readers than a more elevated style could possibly have done.

The student of verse will not fail to observe the alterations which I have occasionally made in the Spenserian stanza; particularly that of the Alexandrine in the first verse and elsewhere; an alteration which, when judiciously introduced in a long poem like the present, breaks, I think, the monotony of the ending of this noble stanza, and saves the line from the oft-repeated censure of Pope, who speaks of it as one

"Which, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along."

With regard to the subject of the poem,—the life and times of the prophet ELIJAH,—the history has in it one incident which demands inquiry here. The translation of ELIJAH, and the transmission of the writing from him to JEHORAM;—in what order did these events occur? Dr. Macduff, in his recent admirable work, 'The Prophet of Fire', is silent on this matter. Every other event

in the life of the prophet, whether recorded in the Old or in the New Testament, is dwelt upon with most careful minuteness by Dr. Macduff; but the interesting subject of the "writing" is passed over by him without even the most remote allusion. This is very strange; but what is more so, is that Dr. Krummacher, in his deservedly esteemed life of the Tishbite, assigns the priority, to the translation of the prophet; and believes the "writing" to have been miraculously sent to earth by Elijah, years after he had ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire. I am compelled to differ with the venerable Doctor on this point; for, the Scripture narrative admits of a simpler interpretation; and as truth is generally simple, so simplicity of interpretation is generally nearest to truth.

In the first place, it does not follow that because the Scriptures record first the translation of the prophet, and afterwards the transmission of the writing from him, that therefore this was the order of the occurrence of those events. To preserve, as much as possible, an unbroken continuity of narrative, historians often find it necessary to relate out of proper course certain circumstances; thus giving precedence to events which were not first in the order of time. This is done in the very book in which the translation of Elijah is recorded,—the Second Book of Kings,—the tenth chapter of which informs us of the death of Jehu after his having reigned over Israel twenty-eight years;

while the twelfth chapter takes us back one-and-twenty years, and speaks of what occurred in the seventh year of Jehu's reign.

In the second place, the chapter describing the translation of ELIJAH is evidently parenthetical;—it has not any connexion with what precedes it, nor any with what follows; whereas the chapters between which it is inserted constitute one continuous narrative; the former ending with the death of AHAZIAH and a brief mention of his successor; and the latter beginning with the commencement of that successor's reign. The reason for which the translation of ELIJAH is spoken of between these two events is, that after the death-message to Ahaziah, delivered by Elijah in the previous chapter, the history of ELIJAH was at an end, so far as the events of his ministry had to be recorded by the writer of the Second Book of Kings. For, it must be borne in mind that the "writing" which came to Jehoram is not mentioned by that historian. describes the translation of the prophet; but it is the compiler of the Second Book of Chronicles, not the compiler of the Second Book of Kings, who speaks of the "writing" which was sent.

In the third place, it must not be supposed that because, after the account of Elijah's translation, it is another prophet who speaks as the ambassador of GOD, therefore Elijah had departed; for, during the lifetime of Ahab, when it is certain Elijah was on earth, GOD spoke to Ahab four times by other prophets. The first is described as "a prophet";* had this been ELIJAH, no doubt he would, as on other occasions, have been mentioned by name; the second is said to be "a man of God"; the third is called "a certain man of the sons of the prophets"; and the fourth was, we know, "Micaiah, the son of Imlah".

There is therefore every probability that the translation of ELIJAH did not take place at the time assigned for that event by Dr. Krummacher. Indeed, the very circumstance of a writing being sent to Jehoram from Elijah is, in the absence of contrary proof, incontestable evidence that ELIJAH was on earth in the reign of that king. The Scriptures are silent as to the time of the prophet's departure; all that is said is, "It came to pass "when the Lord would take up ELIJAH into heaven by a whirl-"wind",—that such and such were the circumstances of his departure. I have, in order to give completeness to the poem, availed myself of this silence of Scripture, to presume, not that the translation of ELIJAH was subsequent to the reign of JEHORAM; that, I believe to be a fact; but that the prophet remained on earth and saw the fulfilment of his own prophecies;—the destruction of the whole house of Ahab, and of all the worshippers of Baal throughout Israel; and that then, and not before then, "there appeared a "chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and ELIJAH went up by a " whirlwind into heaven."

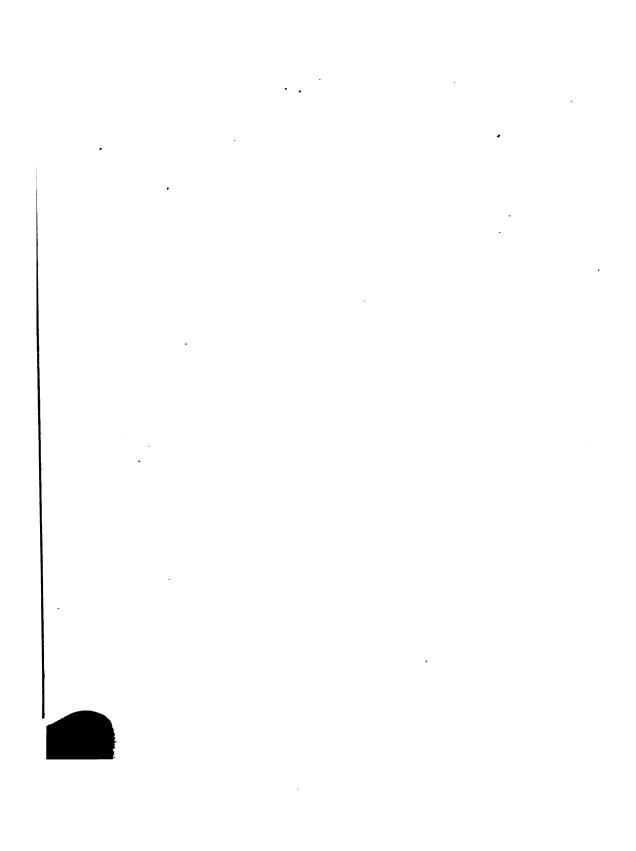
^{* 1} Kings xx, 13. + 1 Kings xx, 28. ‡ 1 Kings xx, 35. § 1 Kings xxii, 8.

I shall never forget the diffidence, I might say the awe, with which I approached the conclusion of my work, and realized that I had to describe the translation of the prophet. That event is one of such overwhelming grandeur, that I was almost induced to adopt the resolution of finishing the poem in the simple and sublime prose of Scripture. However, having written all but the translation, I ventured, though with much hesitancy, to attempt that; and now, I lay my description of it before my readers, and await their judgment. If I have failed, I have at least the consolation of knowing that it has been in an attempt in which even the greatest poet might fail without disgrace.

London, Nov., 1865.

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ELIJAH THE PROPHET.

~coxes

Inbocation.

I.

One lovely star still lingers in the sky,
As if entranced in worship at God's throne;
Unconscious that the blissful moments fly
And she, so beauteous, shineth there alone.
Her heaving jewelled breast to earth makes known
The trembling love that lureth her to stay
And rapturously God's great goodness own.
But, gently roused by morning's earliest ray,
Her brow of light she veils from sight, and steals away.

II.

Still gazing up with earnest eyes to trace

The silv'ry path that star of morn is taking,

I see in brilliant azure heights of space,

Fair fleecy clouds from softest slumbers waking,

As if the waves of light o'er heaven breaking

Dashed the clear blue with foam. No longer cold

The glorious scene appears; for day is making

The summer sky its varied tints unfold;

Gray first, then pink, and now the horizon flames with gold.

ш.

The shadowy mists creep up the roseate mountains,
Dissolve and fade away like waking dreams;
For in the east, as if from sunny fountains,
Day's dazzling rays arise. Now dimpled streams
Answer with smiles heaven's smiling face which seems
Bending o'er earth with love; and dew-drops bright
Sparkle in beauty; but the sun's pure beams
Kiss them, and lo! they vanish from our sight.
O life too brief! from flower and leaf they take their flight.

IV.

Hark! in the vale some little bird is singing,
And sweetly calls its fellows to awake;
And now the lark, into the clear air springing,
Echoes the call; and from each bush and brake
The happy-hearted songsters answering, make
The welkin ring with praise. Rich odours rise
In worship from the flowers; and from the lake,
Reflecting in its depths the o'er-arching skies,
A vapour, as of incense, unto heaven flies.

v.

God's praise the far off cataracts proclaim,
And bow in lowly reverence and adore.
The echoing mountains, too, repeat His name,
And veil their faces with the clouds once more.
His praise the billows sound from shore to shore;
And viewless winds, those spirits of the deep,
Exulting join the ocean's anthem-roar,
And time, to the bounding waves' wild music, keep,
As ever in God's praise their solemn harps they sweep:

4

VI.

And when yon sun, which now is seen to rise,
Shall light at last creation's funeral pyre;
And earth shall perish, and the azure skies
Become one awful winding-sheet of fire;
And stars, like sparks, fly upward and expire;
Their elements dissolved by fervent heat;
E'en then, throughout that dissolution dire,
When clouds in darkness surge beneath God's feet,
Chaos, in mighty thunders, shall His praise repeat.

VII.

And shall the universe of God resound

For ever with His high and glorious praise;

Shall worship in the scent of flowers be found,

And adoration in each star's pure rays;

Is there no dew-drop which in beauty lays

Its soft cheek on a rose-leaf, nor a spring,

Nor a mountain torrent, but whose glad life pays

Its Maker homage; and shall I not bring

To Thee a tribute of my love, my God and King!

VIII.

The worlds of splendour in the midnight sky,
Which gem-like shine so beautifully bright,
Are but Thy breath, Almighty God Most High,
Condensed whilst passing through primeval night
With these creative words,—"Let there be light!"—
Do Thou but speak, and all that's dark in me
At once shall take its everlasting flight;
And, like a star o'er life's tempestuous sea,
My song may haply guide some wandering one to Thee.

IX.

O Spirit of unutterable love,
Of highest wisdom and unbounded grace,
Speak! and as sprang the stars in heaven above,
From the deep darkness of the realms of space
To show in mercy to the human race
Thy still unchanging goodness; here shall shine
Truths which perchance some heart will joy to trace;
Lifting it up from earth to things divine;
The peace and gladness ours; the praise and glory Thine.



Antroduction.

I.

How subtile is the light of beauty! Naught
In painter's art has e'er that light expressed;
And language, what is it? We clothe a thought
In speech; but words, it still must be confessed,
Are but rough hasty sketches; at the best,
Unfinished. Thoughts are oft like butterflies
Which we behold upon a rose's breast
And try to catch.—Lo, instantly they rise!
If caught, the beauty of their plumage with them dies.

II.

Others are like reflected rainbow-hues
Which children vainly grasp at in the stream:—
The lovely colours, to be caught, refuse,
And broken is each bright prismatic beam:
And some are like the music of a dream
That ravished us in sleep;—the thrilling strain
Had notes so exquisite, we almost deem
It heaven-born; and we strive to bring again
Its rich flood o'er our senses; but we strive in vain.

ш.

Ah, well! 'twill not be always thus; the time Is coming when the soul's deep charity
Shall never want sweet bell-like words to chime Its strains of love; but grace and harmony
Of thought shall blend with richest melody
Of utterance; and thrilling song shall o'er
Creation roll its waves till like a sea
They break in gladness upon heaven's shore,
And, falling prostrate on its golden sands, adore.

IV.

Say; when such thoughts are in thy brain assembling,
And heavenly visions o'er thy fancy roll,
Hast thou a consciousness of music trembling
In chords of deepest rapture in thy soul;
As if the Beautiful held sweet control
Over each pulse of joy within thee beating,
And set each thought to music? Is thy goal
The good and true, and not the base and fleeting?
If so, stretch forth thy hand;—I give thee friendly greeting.

v.

Roam thou with me through shady groves of thought,
And let us muse on glorious days gone by.
Heroes, and kings, and prophets who have caught
True inspiration from high heaven, shall vie
In interest with each other while I try
To tell their mighty deeds. Or I will sing
Of other teachers;—of sweet flowers which lie
Strewn in our path, or, by the wayside, spring,
Smiling their grateful thanks to heaven's eternal King.



Canto first.

"I have also spoken by the phophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the phophets."—Hosea xii, 10.

I.

In Israel at the zenith of her power

A palace rose, which in the sun's first rays

Looked as if earth had blossomed into flower,

And stone and cedar breathed forth silent praise.

Arches on arches towered o'er columned ways,

And gardens graced those arches overhead;

And, from the terraced roof, the eye might gaze

Upon a plain whereon had fought and bled

Armies whose mighty foot-fall shook the world with dread.

П.

In spacious hall the king his courtiers met;

And priceless were the riches there displayed;—
Goblets of gold with flashing jewels set;

Urns of chased silver from whose lids there strayed
Incense most precious; tapestry inlaid

With gemmed escutcheons worked by Beauty's daughters;

Flowers of all hues and blossomings, arrayed
In wreaths and coronals on gold supporters;

And purest marble fountains whence gushed cooling waters.

III.

Ahab, the king, in robes of Tyrean dye,
And wearing on his head a golden crown,
Was seated, with his haughty queen, on high;
And princes came before him; their renown
Making them welcome there. They, bowing down,
Did homage to their king. He bade them rise,
Asked of the state, and added with a frown,—
"What of Jehovah's worshippers? The wise
"And noble ones of Israel's sons, His service must despise.



IV.

- "His power is gone; if e'er His power had sway;
- "For, lo! His word declares that when, on earth,
- "Man by idolatry corrupts his way,
- "Heav'n shall be sealed !—the clouds shall not give birth
- "To fruitful showers, that there may come a dearth
- "Of nature's stores. But see! the clustered vine
- "Its richness yields for swift-winged hours of mirth;
- "And around summer bowers the beauteous flowers still twine.
- "At threats then we laugh, and joyously quaff the deep-"blushing rosy wine.

v.

"Ha! Ha! What were life but for wine? Rise now
"And drink confusion to——" "Thyself and thine!"
Exclaimed a solemn voice. King Ahab's brow
Grew dark as night; the cup that held the wine
Was dashed aside; and, with a scowl malign,
He asked whence came that voice. Then once again
That voice was heard:—"Unto thyself and thine!"
And Ahab saw Elijah; but in vain
Strove to give utterance to the rage that burnt his brain;

VI.

For, from that noble face there beamed a soul
Of such sublime and overwhelming power,
That Ahab felt the stream of utterance roll
Back to its fountain, and his proud heart cower
Beneath that glance. His brows now darkly lower,
But his fierce passion holds its fevered breath.
A pause ensues, solemn as midnight's hour;
And in a stillness, deep as that of death,
Elijah speaks:—"Hear me, O monarch; for thus saith

VЦ.

- "He against whom thou liftest up thy voice,
- "And in thy bold impiety blasphemest:-
- "'I know thy ways, and that thou dost rejoice
- "'Ever in evil deeds; and even deemest
- "'Thy guilt thy glory; and that thou esteemest
- "'The sin of Jeroboam as a slight
- "'And venial thing; and arrogantly dreamest
- "'Of bolder crime; -scaling power's dizziest height,
- "'That unto sin thy soul may swoop with swifter flight.

VIII.

"'And to its climax thou thy guilt dost bring,
"'By taking, as thy partner on the throne,
"'The daughter of Ethbaal, Zidon's king,
"'Who worships Ashtaroth. But, be it known
"'To thee, to her, to all, that I alone
"'Am God!'" Fire flashed from Jezebel's dark eyes,
And swords leaped from their scabbards; and a tone
Of anger, as when ocean's waves arise,

IX.

Burst from the thousands there: -- "Jehovah we despise!"

Elijah stood unmoved;—he feared no sword!

And thus God's message unto them conveyed;—

"Mark ye my words, despisers of the Lord;

"Tremble, O earth; be horribly afraid;

"And desolate be thou; for He who made,

"And who upholds, the universe, declares:—

"'The sun shall perish; every star shall fade

"'And fall from out the coronet Night wears,

"'But this word shall not fail; and thus Jehovah swears:—

X.

"'On Israel shall descend no dew nor rain,

"'For weeks, for months, for years; and ye shall know

"''Twas not from want of power to restrain,

"'That all things have continued on to flow

"'In their accustomed courses. Crime may go

"'Awhile unpunished; but wrath's slumbering fire,

"'Will rage at last. E'en now in store there glow

"'Vast fires volcanic,—treasures of Mine ire,

"'Against the time when earth shall meet her sentence "'dire."

XI.

"Madman! take heed thou meetest not thine own.

"How darest thou, unsummoned, thus appear

"In this our palace, and insult our throne

"With impious threats? Ye gods of Israel, hear!

"Why sleep your thunders? Man! I neither fear

"Nor will I serve thy God. Begone!-I say;

"And, by this cup, if thou dost linger near—"
Heaven's lightning dashed the uplifted cup away;
And, on the banquet floor, king Ahab speechless lay.

XII.

Loud rolled the thunder with a deafening peal;
The hall was filled with hot sulphureous smoke;
A moment the foundations seemed to reel,
Then shudderingly recovered from the stroke.
Some guests were heard, in terror, to invoke
Baal, the god of Ekron, to their aid;
Others with fear were palsied; and some spoke—
But in faint mutterings. All were afraid
Save one,—the prophet; who with calmness all surveyed,

XIII.

Then left the palace, and in sorrow heaved
A bitter sigh for all the misery
He knew was coming on his proud, deceived,
And guilty race, for their impiety.—
He's gone; none daring to oppose; but, see!
The king awakes as from a troubled dream;
And, half uprising, stares all vacantly;
His mind being racked with dread of the Supreme,
Whom, in his impious folly, he had dared blaspheme.

XIV.

The courtiers, almost paralyzed by fright,
Yet gathered quickly round the prostrate king;
All fearing that the lightning in its flight
Had pierced his brain; but he, recovering,
Half rose, for still in terror did he cling
Unto the ground; then said,—"From out my grasp
"The lightning dashed my cup and seemed to fling
"Heaven's fire into my brain; and, like an asp,
"To sting me. O most horrible it was, to gasp,

XV.

- "Not for existence, but for death; ay, death!
- "But, as I gasped, life more intense became;
- "And reptiles were emitted in my breath.
- "Like scorpions were they, and they tried to aim,
- "At these mine eyes, their barbéd stings. Then flame
- "Surrounded me; and, lo, they instantly,
- "To escape its fury, crept into my frame;
- "Yes, scathed and burning; and I felt in me
- "The horrible convulsions of their agony.

XVI.

- "At length they died; and dying became cold;
- "Icily cold, and clammy; and their slime
- "Oosed through my pores; and then my feverish hold
- "Of life grew fainter; and the things of time
- "Passed from my vision; but an awful clime,
- "All fire, received me that I there might feel
- "Tortures more wracking still; -my every crime,
- "Which mocking fiends proclaimed with hellish zeal,
- "Was burnt into my writhing soul with Wrath's great seal.

XVII.

- "But hell's volcano hurled me forth again;
- "And like a meteor I flew through space;
- "The world receded 'neath me; and in vain
- "I looked for moon and stars;—at lightning-pace
- "They vanished past me in my upward race
- "With the hot winds which rushed with me from hell;
- "And far below I left the last faint trace
- "Of things created; yet a fearful spell
- "Still bore me on through realms where Gloom and Chaos "dwell.

XVIII.

- "Before a dazzling sapphire throne I stood,
- "Mantled in darkness like a thing of night;
- "Whilst all around, the spirits of the good
- "Stood radiant as if robed in living light.
- "Yet world there was not; but effulgence bright
- "Whose centre was the throne of Deity;
- "And, o'er that centre, angels winged their flight;
- "And, in their rapid transit, seemed to be
- "A golden halo of intensest brilliancy.

XIX.

- "One glorious spirit drew a mighty breath;
- "Then long and loud a trumpet blast he blew;
- "Calling earth's millions from the shades of death,
- "That every man might stand for judgment, due
- "According to his deeds. Slowly in view,
- "The countless dead, enrobed in shadows, came;
- "And, as they nearer to the brightness drew,
- "A book was opened; and, on leaves of flame,
- "Each saw inscribed his sins whilst thunders spoke his "name.

XX.

- "On, and still onward, rolled that countless host,
- "As roll the waves in ocean's coming tide;
- "Now shrinking back, as from a dreaded coast,
- "Now dashing on, as though they death defied.
- "But, O that book !—that blaze upon which Pride
- "Looked and was blinded! In the mighty shoal
- "Of human beings none himself could hide
- "From its all-piercing light;—it swept the whole
- "Assembled universe, and lighted up each soul.

XXI.

- "God severed, in a mighty hurricane,
- "The gathered millions of the dead, asunder;
- "Then wrought the lightning's flash into a chain;
- "And rivetted its links with bolts of thunder;
- "Whilst, from the abyss of darkness roaring under,
- "Satan uprose! His eyeballs seemed to smoke
- "With fierce and deadly hatred; and mute wonder
- "Checked all the nations' breath; but, as he spoke,
- "God's red right arm of wrath was raised,—and I awoke."

END OF FIRST CANTO.



Canto Second.

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men'is fully set in them to do evil."—Ecoles. viii, 11.

ı.

The morrow dawned; the sun in splendour rose,
And cloudless shone in heaven's ethereal blue.
The evening came; Earth sank to calm repose;
And, o'er her, Night his sable mantle threw,
Then watched her slumbers, like a lover true,
With ever-blissful eyes. Thus day by day
Rolled on; and being summer, when the dew
And rain, in eastern climes, their fall delay,
The drought, men thought, was simply nought; and laughed their time away.

п.

But soon flowers drooped on Nature's fevered breast;
The wild bees missed the flowers and pined away;
The unfledged birds, too, sickened in each nest;
And parent birds bemoaned with piteous lay
Their desolated homes. Day after day
Each scene once beauteous became more drear;
The herbage withered 'neath the sun's fierce ray,
And plants and trees cast off their leaflets sear;
And down the face of man oft coursed the silent tear.

ш.

Ahab, amazed at all that met his view,
Sought for Elijah; but in vain he sought.
Then Jezebel, in fiendish passion, slew
The prophets who in love the people taught.
But Obadiah, full of generous thought,
One hundred hid, by fifty in a cave,
And daily to them bread and water brought;
And thus from death, the nobly good did save.
Elijah's friend was he, and bravest of the brave.

ıv.

Meanwhile Elijah, under God's direction,
Had journeyed eastward, and, by Cherith's brook,
A safe retreat had found, where calm Reflection
Might love to muse on providence, and look
Contentedly at mysteries. The spot partook
Of rugged beauty; it was wild as lair
Of savage beasts; indeed, their roarings shook
Swift Jordan's banks, and served perhaps to scare
Away the ruthless men who sought Elijah there.

v.

Picture the aged prophet as he dwelt
By Cherith's brook;—around his form he wore
A hairy mantle girt with leathern belt;
While, in his hand, a pilgrim's staff he bore;
And, near his heart, that which he valued more
Than daily food,—the law of God Most High:
That was his stay. Of food he had no store;
But God, who feeds the ravens when they cry,
By ravens fed Elijah till the brook ran dry.

VL.

No weary sense of loneliness came o'er him;
For though, while there, no human voice he heard;
The rippling waters of the stream before him
Seemed oft by hidden silvery music stirred;
And often the sweet singing of some bird,
Whose little breast with rapturous notes was swelling,
Seemed to his fancy like the joyous word
Of some pure spirit, of God's goodness telling;
And these and kindred sounds made glad his lonely dwelling.

VП.

Into that quiet glen near Jordan's stream,

A mountain torrent bounded from on high;

Then eddying slumbered tranquilly to dream

Of loving stars which looked down from the sky

Into the answering waters. Flowers still sigh

Their worship there to God, in odours sweet

As angels' breath; for angels graciously

Spoke to the prophet in that calm retreat;

Making the spot most hallowed ground;

And still the sunshine lingers 'round the impress of their feet.



VIII.

Deep in Elijah's spirit were enshrined
A reverence for God, and true delight
In all His works. It was his joy to find
"God" upon all things, in the depth and height.—
The delicately beautiful; the might
Of mountain storms; the lovely quiet face
Of heaven; and the stars so pure, so bright,
Shining in the infinitude of space,
Spoke to his glowing heart of God's o'erflowing grace.

IX.

But after many days the brook dried up
Because no rain had fallen on the land.
Thus, with new sorrows, was the bitter cup
Of trial put into Elijah's hand.
Methinks I see the prophet come and stand
With grave astonishment by Cherith's brink;
And hear him in bewildering doubt demand,
As more and more he sees the water shrink,
"Did not God promise that of this brook I should drink?"

X.

Most true, Elijah; but thy doubts dispel,
And to the winds cast thou thy gathering fears;
For He who truly doeth all things well,
Would send thee hence to dry a widow's tears:
And this all-faithful streamlet disappears
That thou mayest be more willing hence to go.
But, hark!—What sound is that which greets our ears?
'Tis but the rushing winds which towards us blow.
That light?—it is the golden sunset's reddening glow.

XI.

So mightest thou and I have thought, my friend,
Had we been there; but well Elijah knew
The sight and sound mysterious, to portend
That then towards earth a mighty angel flew.
Elijah, closer 'round, his mantle drew,
And veiled his face, and bowed himself in prayer;
Whilst thus in words of kindness, sweet though few,
The angel spoke:—"To Zarephath repair;
"Behold, a widow woman shall sustain thee there."

XII.

Elijah rose and went; and coming to
The wall of Zarephath, he at the gate
Beheld a poor and care-worn woman who
Was entering, bearing sticks. So desolate
She seemed, he straightway asked her of her state,
Then craved a little water; and as she
Towards him turned with look compassionate,
He said to her:—"I pray thee, give to me
"A morsel, too, of bread; for very charity."

XIII.

Laying her burden down, she raised her eyes
Towards Elijah, and thus sadly spake:—

- "My own wants teach me never to despise
- "Another's prayer; and for Jehovah's sake,
- "I'd help thee; but have not a single cake,
- "And but of oil and flour a small supply;
- "And I have gathered sticks, that I may bake
- "The little morsel, that my son and I
- "May eat our last sad lonely meal on earth,—and die."

XIV.

Her very soul lay prostrate in the dust,
And thus Elijah spoke:—"God faileth none!

"Trust thou in Him; and manifest thy trust

"By making first a cake for me; that done,

"Then make one for thyself and for thy son,

"Thine only son,—God's gift of priceless worth;

"For thus has said the High and Mighty One;

"The meal and oil shall last until the dearth

"Give place to plenty when He sendeth rain on earth."

XV.

With joyous faith, the prophet's voice obeying, She cast away each dark foreboding fear; And trusted to Elijah's gracious saying; And true it is, though strange it may appear, The meal and oil sufficed them for a year; Yet ne'er became their store of meal the less, Nor failed the cruse of oil. O, ye who hear These simple truths, remember in distress, Jehovah still is love, and love delights to bless.



XVI.

Full many a lesson did Elijah teach her,
Of God's great love unto the human race;
And, as she listened to the mighty preacher,
The tears of joy coursed down her furrowed face.
But there was one great lesson of God's grace
She had to learn; 'twas this;—God will not dwell
In any other than the heart's chief place;
And there her son, with love no words can tell,
Was cherished.—Ah! she sinned in loving him too well:

XVII.

And so God took him; yea, he drooped and died,
E'en like a flower on a loving breast.
God loved that mother; therefore from her side
He took her son, as unto Him seemed best,
That on Himself alone her heart might rest.
That weeping heart was torn with anguish wild;
And thus its overwhelming grief expressed:—
"Why so long closed those eyes which ever smiled
"Upon thy widowed mother?—Speak! my child, my child!"

XVIII.

Poor bruiséd heart, thou callest him in vain;
Those fast closed eyes shall never open more
Till God shall raise the dead to life again,
And to thine arms thy now lost son restore.
Meekly her loss that widowed mother bore;
But said unto Elijah,—"Why did I
"Receive thee when thou didst my aid implore?
"For, since thou cam'st, my sin of days gone by
"Is brought to God's remembrance,—and my son must die."

XIX.

Elijah said to her,—"Give me thy son";
And, from the mother's bosom as she wept,
He gently bore away her lifeless one
Into an upper chamber where he slept,
And laid him on the bed; then softly stepped
He back and closed the door; and, bending o'er
The lifeless child, prayed thus:—"O God, accept
"Our thanks for Thy great goodness heretofore,
"And still from ill bring good, that all may Thee adore."

XX.

One hand he placed then on the clay-cold form,
The other raised to God in fervent prayer,
Beseeching Him that little heart to warm.—
"Faith falters, but it yields not to despair,"
Said he; "faith still I have.—Yes, Lord, I dare
"Believe that Thou my suit wilt entertain.
"What though no record tells me Thou hast e'er
"Restored the dead?—that does not Thee restrain!
"O Lord, let this child's soul come into him again."

XXL.

Jehovah heard Elijah's pleading voice;
And lo! the boy awoke and sweetly smiled.
"O woman," then Elijah said, "rejoice!
"God in His love restores to thee thy child."—
Words could not utter all the rapture wild
Of that full heart, as around her boy she threw
Her loving arms and clasped him to her breast.—
Her lips were dumb with joy; but God, who knew
Her heart, knew that although its thanks were not addressed
To Him in words, its love His goodness still confessed:
And He that love accepted, and that heart had rest.

END OF SECOND CANTO.

•

Canto Third.

"When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn nighteousness."—Isaiah xxvi, 9.

I.

The fearful drought Elijah had proclaimed,
Continued; and no rain fell; no, nor dew;
And Syria, once for sylvan beauty famed,
Was parched and burnt, and desolate to view.
Mount Carmel languished; and no roses grew
On lovely Sharon, where they bloomed of yore.
The beauteous lilies no reviving knew;
And Eschol's vines, which erst such clusters bore,
Were sapless, leafless, dead.—The vintage-shout was o'er!

II.

But after forty months had passed away,
Jehovah this word to Elijah sent:—
"Show thou thyself to Ahab. I will stay
"The rain no longer"; and Elijah went.
Now famine raged throughout the whole extent
Of Syria; and the ghastly dead were lying
With faces upturned to the firmament;
And, through the film of death, they still seemed eyeing
The sun, and from afar the eagles swiftly flying.

ш.

Then Ahab said to Obadiah:—"Go
"And search thou well for pasturage, and pass
"Through every vale where streams were wont to flow;
"For, peradventure, we may yet find grass
"To save the horses and the mules." Alas,
To think that e'er there should have been days when
Horses, and hybrids between horse and ass,
Were far more cared for than poor dying men!—
But have not we our Ahabs now, as they had then?

IV.

Good Obadiah hastened to obey

The king's command to search each shady dell;

And, lo! Elijah met him in the way,

And cried, "Hail! Obadiah; is all well?"

At first he stood as if some mystic spell

Bound him to earth; then asked in love and fear:—

"Art thou my lord Elijah?" and he fell

And kissed his feet. "I am," replied the seer;

"Return and tell thy lord, king Ahab, I am here."

. **v.**

Then Obadiah said,—"What have I done,
"That thou to death wouldst so deliver me?
"As liveth God! I swear that there is none
"Of all the nations where, to look for thee,
"King Ahab has not sent; and solemnly
"He took of all an oath when they did say
"They found thee not; and now, it thus will be,—
"The Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee away,
"And Ahab, being mocked, will me most surely slay.

VL.

- "But I, thy servant, fear God from my youth.
- "Was it not told my lord what I did when
- "They slew the blessed martyrs of the truth?
- "How, risking life, I hid a hundred men
- "By fifty in a cave in this wild glen:
- "And dost thou think I fear death now? Nay, nay;—
- "No more, believe me, than I feared death then;
- "Yet life I will not lightly throw away."
 Elijah answered,—"I will see the king this day."

VII.

Then Obadiah ran and told the king,
Who, with surprise, cried,—"How! Elijah here?"
"Most true, O king; this mountain pass will bring
"Thee quickly unto him; I left him near."
Thus urged, he went; although with heart of fear;
And meeting him, he said,—"I have thee now,
"Thou troubler of my people!" But the seer
Answered king Ahab with undaunted brow:—
"It is not I who trouble Israel, but thou;

VIII.

- "Thou and thy father's house in that ye live
- "Regardless of the judgments of the Lord,
- "And that thou followest Baalim! Now give
- "Command that Israel with one accord
- "To Carmel come, with Baal's priests abhorred,
- "And Jezebel's four hundred prophets. There
- "Let them pray unto Baal to afford
- "Proof of his power; and let fire declare
- "Who is the Lord, and who alone can answer prayer."

IX.

So Ahab sent and gathered all the hosts
Of Israel unto Carmel; and they came
From Dan and Bethel, Gilead and the coasts
Of Tyre and Sidon; for, the deathless fame
Of him who closed the heavens in God's name,
Had spread throughout the kingdom far and wide;
And when they heard the messengers proclaim
That he would meet them on Mount Carmel's side,
They through Esdrælon's plain surged onward like a tide;

X.

From morn till noon; from noon till night the same;
And through the night; and when the morning broke,
Elijah to the assembled thousands came,
And thus with firmness and persuasion spoke:—

- "O Israel, wherefore bow ye 'neath the yoke
- "Of slavish indecision day by day?
- "Why do ye doubt whose aid ye should invoke?
- "If Baal be God, then serve ye him, I say;
- "But if Jehovah, then to Him your homage pay.

XI.

- "God has, of old, oft made His power known,
- "And now will make that power known again.
- "I, Great Jehovah's prophet, stand alone;
- "But Baal's prophets are four hundred men;
- "Let each an offering make ready; when,
- "I'll call on Him whose altar here lies broken,
- "And call ye on the name of your God; then,
- "The God that answers by a fiery token,
- "He is the God." The people said, "'Tis fairly spoken!"

XII.

Therefore the priests could no reluctance show.

- "Now," said Elijah, "slay your bullock first,
- "For ye are many; but let there be no
- "Concealed fire 'neath the sacrifice; for curst
- "For ever before God be he who durst
- "Deceive this people." So the priests drew near,
 And, having sacrificed, then madly burst
 Into a frantic yell, half hope, half fear;
 And cried from morning until noon,—"O Baal, hear!"

хш.

And, when none answered them by voice or flame,
They leaped upon the altar in despair;
And then Elijah, about mid-day, came,
And thus with irony rebuked their prayer:—

- "Cry ye aloud; your god's far off; and there
- "Perhaps is talking; or perhaps pursuing
- "His enemies; or journeyeth somewhere;
- "Or, fresh from war, and, weary with imbruing
- "His hands in blood, is now in sleep his strength renewing."

XIV.

Thus taunted, they became more furious still,
And, unto Baal, still more loudly cried,
And cut themselves with knives and lancets till
Their blood gushed out; and then they prophesied,
When noon had passed away, that eventide
Would solve the problem and give victory
To Baal; but no voice to them replied;—
Save the weird laughter of the moaning sea,
And mountain echoes answering derisively.

XV.

Elijah then unto the people turned,
And said with loving voice, "Come near to me";
For o'er them all, his noble spirit yearned,
And longed that they from priestcraft should be free.
There was a ruined altar near; and he
Rebuilt it as it was in days of yore;—
Of twelve stones built he it, that there might be
A stone for every tribe, and men once more
In brotherhood unite, Jehovah to adore.

XVI.

As great as was sufficient to contain
Two measures full of seed; and next he laid
The wood in order; and when he had slain
The bullock and divided him in twain,
He laid him on the wood. Then said he,—"Fill
"Four barrels full of water; for, though rain
"For years has fallen not, a fountain still
"Gushes with joyous plenty half way down the hill."

XVII.

They ran and filled the barrels. "Now," said he,
"Pour it upon the sacrifice and wood."
'Twas done; and all the people wond'ringly
Around about the altar mutely stood.
"Now lest a thought that fire is hid there, should
"Be in the heart," said he, "of any one,
"Do so once more." 'Twas done, so that there could
Be no fire there. "Now let the water run,"
Said he, "and fill the trench"; and once again 'twas done.

хvш.

Elijah then came near and said,—"O Thou

- "Whose name, and whose alone, is GOD MOST HIGH;
- "In lowliest abasement would I bow
- "Myself before Thee; yet with faith draw nigh
- "Believing Thou dost always hear the cry
- "Of hearts sincere. Behold, I now appeal
- "To Thee to manifest Thy majesty.
- "O Thou who, answering prayer, didst heaven seal;
- "Now open heaven by fire, and thus Thyself reveal."

XIX.

Unto the earth the fire of heaven fell,
Consuming both the sacrifice and wood;
Ay, and the very stones and dust as well,
And water in the trench; and those who stood
On Carmel and beheld the burning, could
Not bear the brightness thus around them thrown;
But bowed their heads and cried,—"O Great, and Good,
"And Mighty One of Israel! we own
"That Thou art God o'er all, and reign'st supreme, alone."

XX.

- "Then take the prophets," said Elijah, "and
- "Let none of them escape; for well ye know
- "The law of God containeth this command:-
- "'If any one enticeth thee to go
- "'And serve and worship other gods; although
- "'He be thy brother, or one dearer still,
- "'Thou shalt not spare, nor pity, him; nor show
- "'Him any mercy; but shalt surely kill
- "'That wicked person.' This commandment now fulfil."

XXI.

They took the prophets; and down Carmel's side
To Kishon's brook they hurried them away,
And slew them there; and reddened was the tide,
With human blood, that rolled to Acre's bay.
Ah! horrid was the slaughter on that day.
Four hundred bodies floated down the stream;
And every ghastly visage seemed to say:—
"No cheering thought, no soul-inspiring beam
"Of hope illumed our passage from life's feverish dream."

XXII.

The king had witnessed all that had transpired;
He heard the challenge which Elijah made,
And saw his triumph when Jehovah fired
The prophet's sacrifice; and, being swayed
Ever by impulse, he unsheathed his blade
And cheered the people on as they imbrued
Their hands in blood; but Ahab's zeal betrayed
Its utter falseness. It could but delude
The ignorant infatuated multitude.

XXIII.

Elijah scornfully to Ahab said,—

"Go thou, and eat and drink; I hear a sound

"Of an abundant rain." He knew him wed

To pleasure; and that when the parchéd ground,

By rain refreshed, should be with verdure crowned,

He would forget God's judgments; and again

In all his former wickedness be found.

Elijah therefore, in ironic strain,

Said,—"Go thou, eat and drink; there is a sound of rain."

XXIV.

Pride blinded Ahab so that, strange to say,
He did not mark the bitter irony
Hid in Elijah's words, and went his way
To eat and drink in thoughtless revelry.
Far differently Elijah acted; he
Prayed, and then told his servant to repair
To Carmel's top, and look towards the sea.—
He came back saying,—"I see nothing there."
Six times Elijah said,—"Go back; God answers prayer."

XXV.

Upon God's faithfulness he took his stand; And soon the youth exclaimed,—"God heareth thee!

- "Behold, a cloud no bigger than my hand,
- "Ariseth like a vapour from the sea!"-
- "So," said Elijah, "shall it ever be
- "When man, forgetting self, makes prayer for what
- "Will honour God. Go thou and say from me
- "Unto the king, 'Prepare thy chariot
- "'And get thee quickly down, that the rain stop thee not."

XXVI.

He went; and lo, e'en while he told the king, Dark heavy clouds rolled up surcharged with rain; The wind arose, those freighted clouds to bring Over the land; and soon Esdrælon's plain Was swept by hurrying thousands once again. Elijah, who no sympathy could feel For Baal's priests, still studied to obtain Respect for kings. Exemplary in zeal, And preaching ever by some deed, He ran before king Ahab's steed,— Though fleetest one of Arab breed And galloping at utmost speed,—from Carmel to Jezreel. God's hand was on the prophet, and he flew As if his feet had wings; And though long ages have rolled by since then, The lesson of God's prophet unto men is still divinely true. Truth changes not with lapse of time! No; ever as we higher climb The mount of years, there rings, Borne upward as on trumpet-blast, This lesson from the mighty past,—"Respect is due to kings!"

END OF THIRD CANTO.

Canto fourth.

"I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lond in the land of the living. Glait on the Lond; be of good counage, and He shall strengthen thy heart; wait, I say, on the Lond."—PSALM XXVII, 13, 14.

I.

The haughty Jezebel, from Ahab heard
The story of Elijah's victory,
And how the priests were slaughtered at his word,
And Kishon's brook that rolleth rapidly
Had borne their ghastly bodies out to sea.
Then, when she knew of all that he had done,
She said,—"So let the gods do unto me,
"And also more, if as the life of one
"Of them, I make not his life by to-morrow's sun."

Ц.

When Obadiah of her fury heard,
That faithful governor of king Ahab's court
Came to Elijah bearing secret word
How that his life by Jezebel was sought.
So when he saw that staying there was fraught
With certain danger, he arose and fled;
And to Beersheba came; and thither brought
His servant, the poor widow's son, and said,
"Return, my child; God's blessing rest upon thy head;

ш.

"Farewell"; and then Elijah went his way
From Beersheba towards the wilderness;
And sat beneath a tree, at close of day,
A weary man, a picture of distress;
And thus did he his hopeless grief express;—
"It is enough; my life, Lord, take away;
"For, wretched and despairing, I confess
"I am not better than my fathers; nay,
"I've served thee with less zeal and less effect than they."

IV.

God heard the prophet's sad desponding voice,
But granted not his foolish heart's desire;
In love refusing him his unwise choice,
To purify him in affliction's fire.—
Ah! did God give all we think we require
To make our mortal life supremely blest,
How often in that life it would transpire
That we were injured at our own request!—
God is all-wise and good, and giveth what is best.

v.

An angel, to Elijah sleeping, came
And touchéd him, and said, "Arise and eat."
He awoke; and lo, one like a dazzling flame
Of sacred fire was standing at his feet;
But, ere he could the form angelic greet,
It vanished from his sight; and there before him
He saw a cake of finest flour of wheat,
And little cruse of water to restore him;
And having ate and drank, deep sleep again came o'er him.

VI.

Once more the angel said, "Arise and eat,
"Because the journey is too great for thee."
O wondrous grace! O words most kind and sweet!
O vista through which heaven appears to me!
So, Father, speak Thou in eternity:—
With words of love, sweet as a parent's kiss,
'Waken Thy sleeping child. Let Thy voice be
The first I hear in heaven's bright world of bliss,
And last kind voice of love that comforts me in this

VII.

Elijah ate the food that God had sent;
And then, with thankful heart for all His care,
O'er burning desert sands he fasting went;
For forty days and nights a wanderer where
His fathers wandered forty years; and there
On Horeb's sacred mount, by grief oppressed,
He, in a cave, poured out his soul in prayer
To Him whose grace has said to the distressed,—
"Come unto Me, and lean upon My breast,
"And tell Me all thy woes, My child, and I will give thee
"rest."

VIII.

Then God came to him with this solemn word,-

- "What doest thou here, Elijah?"—and he said,
- "I was, for God, most jealous; but I erred
- "Through yielding unto fear. I hither fled
- "Because my spirit was o'erwhelmed with dread;
- "For ah! they have Thine altars thrown down; yea,
- "The blood, too, of Thy prophets have they shed;
- "And I, e'en I alone, am left; and they,
- "With cruel hatred, seek to take my life away."

IX.

God spoke again unto him, saying—"Go
"Thou forth and stand before Me;" and he went
Obediently to God's command; and lo!
A whirlwind in its fury came, and rent
The mountains 'round him; and, its wrath being spent, '
An earthquake shook Mount Horeb to its base;
And subterranean fires then finding vent,
Their flames shot up to heaven, as if to trace
Jehovah's awful name upon unbounded space.

X.

But not in whirlwind, earthquake, or in fire,
Does God, the knowledge of Himself impart;
We hear, we fear, we tremble or expire;
Only the voice of love can melt the heart.
Life's bitter penitential tears will start,
Not at the curses of the broken law;—
Thunders may peal, and lurid lightnings dart
In fury around us, it is love must thaw
The fount of tears, and unto God our spirits draw.

XI.

The whirlwind in its fury passed away;
The earthquake 'neath the mountains sank to rest;
The far off rolling thunders seemed to say,—
"Great God, we worship Thee, the Ever Blest";
And kindred feelings thrilled the prophet's breast.
Then all was peaceful as the sky we see
After a storm, when, in the radiant west,
The sunlight fades, and night's dark mystery
Is brightened by the stars. What say those stars to thee?

XII.

Ah! hast thou never heard their heavenly voices?
Is not thine ear attuned to catch their song?
Hark! while we speak the glittering host rejoices,
And chords are struck, now tremulous, now strong,
And now a diapason; and a throng
Of richest notes in choral harmony
Floats down to earth. Hush! Hush! I would prolong
Its faintest echoes; for it is, to me,
Hymns from the spirit-land, telling, Great God, of Thee.

XIII.

After the earthquake and the fire, there came
A still small voice of love and mercy true.
In gentleness it breathed Elijah's name;
And Peace, around his neck, her soft arms threw,
And kissed away the tear-drops, as the dew
Is kissed, by sunshine, from the summer flowers;
And he rejoiced in spirit to renew
Communion with Him whose love embowers
With blessings and bright hopes these trembling hearts of ours.

XIV.

Again there came to Him this solemn word,—

- "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and he said,
- "I was, for God, most jealous; but I erred
- "Through yielding unto fear. I hither fled
- "Because my spirit was o'erwhelmed with dread;
- "For ah! they have Thine altars thrown down; yea,
- "The blood, too, of Thy prophets have they shed;
- "And I, e'en I alone, am left; and they
- "With cruel hatred seek to take my life away."

XV.

God answered him, - "Return thou on thy way

- "Unto Damascus; and anoint thou there
- "Hazael king of Syria; and convey
- "Also to Jehu this word; 'Make thou bare
- "'Thine arm, and smite the house of Ahab; spare
- "'Not old or young; but sweep them to the tomb,
- "'And reign thou over Israel.' But ere
- "The house of Ahab meet their righteous doom,
- "Elisha, son of Shaphat, call, as prophet, in thy room.

XVI.

- "Then this shall come to pass;—him that escapes
- "The sword of Hazael, shall Jehu slay;
- "And him that yet from Jehu's sword escapes,
- "Elisha, by my Spirit's sword, shall slay;
- "And whereas thou despondingly didst say
- "That thou alone wast left; be it known to thee,
- "I have in Israel, among those who pray,
- "Seven thousand who have never bowed the knee,
- "Or Baal kissed, or worshipped any God but Me."

XVII.

The solemn shades of evening closed around
The prophet, on Mount Horeb's lonely height;
And suddenly, yet gently, died the sound
Of that kind voice; as dies the beauteous light
Of day in Eastern climes. But stars most bright
Shone where the glorious sunlight shone before.
So with the seer;—when God withdrew, 'twas night;
But not a starless midnight as of yore.—
The promises shone clear, and made Elijah's heart adore.

XVIII.

Then o'er the desert he his steps retraced;
But O, how different that desert seemed!
It was no more a drear and arid waste;
It was a Paran,—it with beauty teemed;
'Twas a Peniel, for there God's face beamed
Upon His servant. Ah! this earth appears
Oft as if sunlight ever o'er it streamed;
And often, too, a very vale of tears;
For all we see, we colour with our hopes or fears.

END OF FOURTH CANTO.

Canto fifth.

"Hean, () Isnael, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies; let not youn heants faint, fean not, and do not tremble; neithen be ye tennified because of them; fon the Lond youn God is He that goeth with you, to fight fon you against youn enemies, to save you."—Deut. xx, 3, 4.

I.

As mighty tempests hurl on rock-bound coasts

The surging billows of the angry main;

So, proud ambition poured the Syrian hosts,

With noise of thunder, on Esdrælon's plain.

But He who curbs the raging deep can rein

War's fiery coursers snorting in their pride,

And dash to earth the riders, and again

Roll back the battle's madly foaming tide.—

Such was the fate of those who Israel's God defied.

II.

Benhadad came with two-and-thirty kings;—
With horsemen and with chariots they came;
Swift as if borne upon the tempest's wings;
Thundering as storm-clouds thunder Wrath's dread name.
Over the hills their spears rose like a flame
From forests set all suddenly on fire.
Terror swept on before them, for their fame
Flew like the wind; and desolation dire
Revealed the death-strewn pathway of their deadly ire.

ш.

The shock of battle, on Samaria fell;
But failed through king Benhadad's love of wine.
Unto his princes, Syria's king said,—"Tell
"King Ahab thus Benhadad says:—'Resign
"'Thy silver, gold, and wives; for all are mine.'"
Did Ahab this aggressive claim repel?
No! He most gladly answered,—"All are thine."
He counted up the cost, and reckoned well
That loss were gain, if loss meant losing Jezebel.

IV.

Either the Syrian monarch ascertained
That he had no cause to congratulate
Himself upon the treasures he had gained;
Or else, ambition, still insatiate
When all is won, esteemed no treasures great
While aught was unpossessed. He sent to say;—
"Beside that which I claimed, I delegate
"My servants this proud city to survey,
"And all that's pleasant in thine eyes to bear away."

v.

Then Ahab called the elders of the land,
And said to them,—"I pray you mark, and see
"How this man seeketh mischief. His demand
"For all my wealth and wives I willingly
"Acceded to; in hope that it might be
"The price of peace; but, not with that content,
"He sendeth to demand still more of me."
They said, "Of this, Benhadad shall repent;
"Hearken not unto him, nor give thou thy consent."

VI.

So Ahab to Benhadad sent back word,—

"I yield all thou didst ask at first as due;

"But nothing more"; which, when Benhadad heard,

He swore to raze Samaria, and strew

Her dust on high, till ev'ry wind that blew

On earth had scattered it, and all was gone.

King Ahab back to him this answer threw;—

"Let not him boast who puts his armour on,

"As he may on whose prowess victory's sun hath shone."

VII.

Benhadad heard this when he was disgracing
His manhood, by intemperance, in his tent.—
He and the kings, by drunkenness, debasing
Themselves below the beasts. Astonishment
Seized every mind, that he, who had so bent
Before Benhadad, now should answer, "No";—
And, flushed with rage and wine, Benhadad sent,
Ordering that when Mount Hermon's peak should with the
sunrise glow,

They should unfurl their flags, and hurl themselves upon the foe.

VIII.

A prophet then approached king Ahab, saying;—

"'Thus saith Jehovah;—'Hast thou seen this horde

"'Which Syria 'gainst the city is arraying?

"Even by them shalt thou know I am Lord;

"'Idols their trust,—defeat be their reward.'"

"By whom," said Ahab, "shall they fall; and how?"

The prophet said,—"Beneath the avenging sword

"Of these thy princes shall they fall." "And now,

"Say who shall guide the battle?" And he answered;—

"Thou!"

IX.

Then Ahab took the sum of those young men,
The princes of his kingdom, and there were
Two hundred and a score and twelve; and then
He numbered all the people who could bear
Arms; and of Israelites, he found that there
Were seven thousand; and he sent these out,
Led by the gallant princes; and the air
Was rent by their defiant, deafening shout,
As, rushing on their foes, they put them to the rout.

X.

The Syrians fled, while Israel pursued,
Fierce as a whirlwind sweeping o'er the plain.
The foe once rallied, but soon flight renewed,
By terror urged, nor stopped, nor turned again.
Vain all their prowess; and their numbers vain;
For, God had fought for Israel that day;
And king Benhadad fled, nor tightened rein,
But galloped with his horsemen; he and they
Shouting as on they passed ahead;—"Away! Away!"

XI.

A prophet came to Ahab on the field
Of battle, and said unto him,—"Now go,
"Strengthen thyself; for thou once more must wield
"The avenging sword against the Syrian foe."—
My brother; victory is of God, we know;
But our work ever must with His combine.
Think of His charge to Israel's king; and show
That whilst thou leanest on an arm divine,
Thou strengthenest thyself; so vict'ry shall be thine.



XII.

The courtiers soon assembled at Damascus,
And to their sovereign reverently said;—

- "If, of our late defeat, the king should ask us,
- "Know, that the reason why the Syrians fled
- "Was this;—the gods of those who were to victory led,
- "Are of the hills, and hence our rout and flight;
- "But let us march forth to the plain instead,
- "And we will rush down with o'erwhelming might;
- "And woe to those with whom we close in mortal fight.

XIII.

- "And that we may our recent shame efface,
- "Take not with thee the kings. Was it not they
- "Who led us to the hills, and brought disgrace
- "On Syria's arms; and lost our host the day?
- "Lead thou, thyself, our host; for we obey
- "With pride our king. Do thou now wisely place,
- "In their stead whom thou thus shalt put away,
- "Captains who never yet have turned their face
- "From any foe; so we our enemies will chase,

XIV.

- "As winds chase thistle-seeds o'er fen and moor,
- "Till rain-drops, which the thunder-clouds have nursed,
- "Strike them to earth. Yes, thou shalt see us pour
- "Our fury upon those who us dispersed,
- "If thou wilt take an army like the first;
- "For we an easy victory shall obtain.-
- "Our foes will once more from Samaria burst,
- "And we will meet them on Esdrælon's plain,
- "Then smite them so that they shall never rise again."

XV.

This counsel, by the king was not rejected;
He, in his zeal, before the following year,
Had horse for horse and man for man, collected,
Like as at first, and even spear for spear.
The Syrians marched to Aphek; and when near,
The Israelites went forth to war again,
And pitched their camps before them, void of fear
Though but like two small flocks of kids; while vain
And boastful Syria's host filled all Esdrælon's plain.

XVI.

Now while Benhadad was the field surveying,
And ordering the battle's stern array;
There came a man of God to Ahab, saying;—
"Thus saith the Lord,—'Because the Syrians say
"'My sceptre hath not universal sway,
"'I give their mighty host into thy hand;
"'That ye may know; nor only ye, but they,
"'That I am God; and that my wide command
"'Sweeps o'er the world, and none my power can with"'stand.'"

XVII.

As thunder-clouds, which seem to meet in ire
And for a time their muttering wrath restrain,
Draw suddenly their flashing swords of fire,
And pour each other's life's-blood on the plain;
So did those armies, menacing, remain;
And muttering thunders caught the oaths they swore;
Then fiercely flashed their deadly swords again,
And far the earth rang with the battle's roar,
And broad Esdrælon's plain was red with human gore.

XVIII.

One hundred thousand of the Syrians there
Were slain by Israel, who, with frantic yell,
Pursued the flying host to Aphek; where
On seven-and-twenty-thousand of them fell
One of the walls and crushed them. Deepest hell
Shook with wild laughter, and with mad delight,
As Satan's minions rushing came to tell,
With flendish joy, the horrors of that sight,
And all the woes of war which tracked the Syrians' flight.

XIX.

Benhadad fled with fear into the city,
And there his servants came to him and said;—
"Behold now, we have heard that much of pity
"Dwelleth in Israel's kings; then let us tread
"Their courts, each man with ashes on his head,
"A rope around his neck, and sackcloth o'er
"His loins; and, down before him whom we dread,
"We'll bow ourselves and earnestly implore
"Thy life, O noble king! and that thou reign once more."



XX.

He heeded not their words; his gloomy brow
Despondingly upon his hands he leant;
His abject misery bearing witness how
The Cedar of Mount Lebanon had bent
Before the storm. "His silence gives consent!"
Thus spake those princes, reasoning with each other;
And sad, yet hopeful, unto Ahab went;
Who answered thus, nor strove his joy to smother;—
"Benhadad! Is he still alive? He is my brother."

XXI.

They caught the word and echoed it again;—

"Thy brother, king Benhadad." Then said he;—

"Seeing your sovereign's not among the slain;

"Go ye, and bring him quickly unto me."

He came; and Ahab said;—"I welcome thee,

"Benhadad! mount my chariot; and now,

"As to thy conqueror's indemnity,

"And to the terms of peace; what sayest thou?

"Thy life is spared; art thou prepared to pay for life; and

"how?"

XXII.

Benhadad answered him;—"I will restore

- "The cities which my father took from thine;
- "And streets, like those my father built of yore
- "Within thy kingdom, shalt thou build in mine;
- "So shall the fame of this thy victory shine
- "With lustre throughout Syria for aye."
- "Enough!" said Ahab; "then be this the sign
- "Of covenant 'twixt thee and me this day;-
- "I take thy hand";—and so he sent his foe away.

XXIII.

Ahab returned;—his fiery coursers prancing,
And heralds loudly trumpeting his fame;
While white-robed damsels, to glad music dancing,
Strewed flowers before him as he onward came.
Samaria welcomed him with loud acclaim;
And, from her battlements, were banners flying,
With "Victory" emblazoned o'er his name.
But ah! in many a home around were lying,
Wept o'er by broken hearts of love, the dead and dying!

XXIV.

And some upon the battle-field were left,
To be devoured by dogs and birds of prey.
See! there lies one whose helmet has been cleft,
Yet still he lives, and strives to scare away
A vulture hovering o'er him. Mothers stray
Over the field, seeking among the dead,
The loved and lost. One seeks an only son;
You hear a shriek;—you turn;—she clasps her head,
A raving maniac;—reason's spark has fled!
Her boy is found;—but war its work has done;—
A Syrian spear is through his body run!
Oh! next to victory lost, the worst is victory won.

END OF FIFTH CANTO.



Canto Sixth.

"Goe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest theachenously, and they dealt not theachenously with thee!"—Isaiah xxxiii, 1.

I.

A PROPHET unto Ahab spoke;—"Thus saith
"The Lord of Hosts:—'Because thou hast let go
"'A man whom I appointed unto death;
"'E'en him whose dire ambition caused to flow
"'The orphans' blood, and widows' tears of woe;
"'Thy life instead of his life shall be taken!"
Ahab, instead of humbly bowing low
Before that God whom he had long forsaken,
Turned haughtily away; his pride of heart unshaken.

п.

'Tis said that whose hardeneth his heart
Shall into evil ruinously fall.
God's Spirit, long resisted, will depart;
For why in vain should that Great Spirit call?—
There was in Jezreel, by the palace wall,
The vineyard of a good and worthy man
Whose name was Naboth. Well beloved by all
And blessed by God, he prospered in each plan;
And o'er the palace wall his rich vines clustering ran.

ш.

Sin made king Ahab's heart and conscience harden,
Till, tempted by the luscious clusters red,
He coveted the vineyard for a garden,
And thus was to most certain ruin led.
To Naboth, owner of the land, he said;—
"Sell me thy vineyard; or, I'll give to thee
"Another, even better, in its stead."
But Naboth answered;—"God forbiddeth me
"To alienate the vineyard from my family."

IV.

The king, enraged to find his scheme was thwarted, Was more so still to find that Naboth fought, And conquered by the Law; for he supported His firm refusal with a reason brought From God's divine commandments. Ahab sought His chamber; where, upon his ivory bed, To perfect helplessness by passion wrought, He threw himself and turned away his head, Refusing food, nor heeding aught his courtiers said.

v.

But Ahab's mood was not explosive rage,
'Twas sullen wrath, on dire revenge intent.

Not the bold lion, bristling to engage

His foe, would fitly, Ahab represent;

Better the tiger with his body bent,

Crouching to make more certain of his prey.

Seeing his mood, the watchful arch-fiend went

To Jezebel, and prompted her to play

The subtle tempter's part, and boldly point the way.

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VI.

She came enquiring;—"Why that gloomy brow;
"And wherefore is it thou dost eat no bread?"
He answered her and said;—"I spoke just now
"To Naboth, that accurséd Jezreelite, and said,
"'Give me thy vineyard, for I wish to spread
"'The bound'ry of my lands; and thou shalt be
"'Repaid its worth; or if thou wilt, instead,
"'I'll give a vineyard, better far.'—but he
"Replied,—'I will not give my vineyard unto thee.'"

VII.

Then Jezebel, his wife, said;—"Dost not thou
"O'er all this mighty realm the sceptre wield?
"Arise! and eat; nor let thy spirit bow
"Because a base fanatic will not yield!
"I will give thee possession of the field";
And, not a moment for his answer staying,
She wrote, in his name, letters; and she sealed
The letters with his seal; by them conveying,
Unto the nobles there, the doom of Naboth; saying,—

VIII.

- "Proclaim a fast; and Naboth set on high
- "Among the people; and before him bring
- "Two men of Belial to testify
- "On oath,—'Thou didst blaspheme thy God and king.'
- "Then lead him forth; and though his wife should fling
- "Herself before you begging you to spare
- "His life; and though his little ones should cling
- "Around your knees, and weeping urge their prayer;
- "Yet still perform your duty;—or their doom ye share!"

IX.

Poor Naboth! See, they hurry him away.—
Ah, hark! the stones are showering on his head.
His wife and little ones; oh! where are they?
There, too! They came entreating that instead
Of Naboth, they might die; and fiends there shed
The life's blood of them all! O Righteous Lord,
The Loving One! have Thy compassions fled,
That Thou dost suffer wretches to reward
Thy servants thus? Why, in its scabbard, rests Thy sword?

X.

'Tis well for us, that God thus suffers long;
And, for repentance giving time, forbears
To draw the sword in punishment of wrong,
That man may sue for pardon while grace spares.
But when he spurns that grace and boldly dares
God's righteous judgments; then His arm is freed
For its "strange work," and for that work prepares,
And then the sword of wrath, with lightning-speed
Comes down; for there is hope no more; and none may
intercede.

XI.

The murderers sent to tell the deed was done;
And Jezebel to Ahab told the same,
And said,—"Now take possession for there's none
"Remains alive of Naboth's house or name,
"The coveted inheritance to claim."
And Ahab went; and this divine command
Unto Elijah from Jehovah came;—
"Go down into Samaria, and withstand
"The claim of Israel's king to martyred Naboth's land.



XII.

- "And say to Ahab,--- Darest thou take possession,
- "'Thou murderer! nor fearest wrath divine!"
- "'Thus saith the Lord;—For this, thy foul transgression;
- "'Where thou didst Naboth to the dogs consign,
- "'The dogs shall lick up thy blood, even thine." —
- "Ha! hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"
 Said Ahab; and his scowl was most malign
 When thus addressed; for not alone was he;—
 Jehu and Bidkar then were in his company.

XIII.

- "I have," replied Elijah, "seeing thou
- "Hast sold thyself to sin; but list to me;
- "And hear thou what Jehovah sayeth now;-
- "'Surely I will bring evil upon thee,
- "'And take away all thy posterity;
- "'And from thy house will cut off ev'ry son;
- "'And like to Jeroboam's it shall be,
- "'And Baasha's;—its course shall soon be run;
- "'For I will make an end when once I have begun;

XIV.

- "'And evil shall pursue thee to the tomb;
- "'And, in its power, Jezebel enthral;
- "'For Naboth's fate shall be her righteous doom;—
- "'The dogs shall eat her by the palace wall!
- "'Thine offspring in the cities, too; they all,
- "'Dying by violence or slow decay,
- "'Shall be devoured by dogs; and those who fall
- "'Dead in the field, the ravenous birds of prey
- "'Shall feast on, and none care to frighten them away."

XV.

When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes; And put on sackcloth; and, with bitter cry, As from a heart which e'en its beatings loathes, Fell to the earth, and lay in ashes, nigh Unto the royal palace. From on high Then came this word;—"Because his tears betoken "Sincere repentance. I will pass him by:

- "Sincere repentance, I will pass him by;—
- "The sceptre shall not in his days be broken;
- "But in his wicked children's days.—The word is spoken!"

END OF SIXTH CANTO.



Canto Sebenth.

"Hast thou manked the old way which wicked men have trodden, which were cut down out of time?"—Job xxii, 15, 16.

I.

The proud ambition Ahab's heart had nourished,
Checked for awhile by words Elijah spoke,
Revived again, and soon in vigour flourished;
E'en as in spring revives the giant oak
To brave the storms and dare the lightning's stroke.
That lightning's stroke from highest heaven fell,
And God's dread thunder over Israel broke;
And Ahab died, his sons, and Jezebel.
The manner, time, and place,—the task be mine to tell.

II.

A royal feast was in Samaria holden,
And king Jehoshaphat was there a guest;
With many a noble in his armour golden;
And many a maiden in embroidered vest;
And mirth and music banished thoughts of rest.
The air was laden with the scent of flowers;
And Ahab said, to some who had expressed
High praises of the balm of Gilead's bowers,
"Have ye forgotten, Sirs, that Ramoth Gilead 's ours?

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- "And rest we still, and take it not again?
- "That gem of beauty which the Syrians tore
- "From out our diadem and would retain
- "Although Benhadad to your monarch swore
- "That all the cities which, in days of yore,
- "The Syrians took, the Syrians should resign.
- "To arms! To arms! War's trumpet sound once more.
- "Jehoshaphat, thy warriors join with mine."—
- "I am as thou art," answered he, "my hosts as thine;

ıv.

"But let us first ask counsel of the Lord."
So Ahab called a conclave, then and there,
Of Baal's priests, and said;—"Unto the sword
"Shall we appeal; or, say, shall we forbear?"
Those fawning sycophants, whose only care
Was how to flatter Israel's king, replied;—
"Appeal to arms, for all the gods declare
"Thy cause is just, and justice shall decide
"That Ramoth Gilead's thine."—But, ah! those priests;
they lied;

v.

And king Jehoshaphat said;—"Is there not
"A prophet of the Lord, besides, through whom
"We might enquire?" A thrill of terror shot
Through Ahab's heart; and o'er his face a gloom
And pallor spread, as deathly as the tomb,
While he replied;—"There is one whom I know,
"Micaiah, son of Imlah; but the doom,
"Which he predicts, is ever one of woe."
Jehoshaphat to Ahab said;—"Let not my friend say so."

VI.

There was another whom king Ahab knew;
And why he named him not we well can guess.—
The memory of him like an arrow flew
Swift through his heart, and made his face confess
His conscious fear; but, with well timed address,
Resolving to avoid that mighty seer,
He quickly named one whom he feared much less;
And said unto a eunuch standing near;—
"Go, and Micaiah, son of Imlah, summon here."

VII.

Now Israel's king, and also Judah's king,
Arrayed in their imperial robes of state,
Were seated in the spacious opening,
Or court of justice, by Samaria's gate;
And while they for Micaiah there did wait,
The priests of Baal came and took their stand
Before the king, and said;—"Thy power is great,
"Thy cause is good; and thus the gods command;—
"'Go up; and Ramoth Gilead shall fall into thy hand.'"

VIII.

The messenger, to good Micaiah went,
And told him how that all the prophets stood
Before the king; and all, with one consent,
Predicted good to him. "And now I would,"
Said he, "that also thou should'st speak of good,
"Lest Ahab upon thee his vengeance wreak."—
"And think'st thou, eunuch," said he, "that I could
"Disown my God! Nay, I am not so weak.
"Those words which He commands; those only will I speak."

IX.

So answered good Micaiah; and he came
Into the royal presence, and drew near
Unto the king, who, calling him by name,
Said;—"Tell me, by the God whom thou dost fear,
"Shall we 'gainst Ramoth Gilead lift the spear,
"Or shall we not; what does thy God command?"
"Go up"; Micaiah said, with scorn severe,
"As these advise who round about thee stand;
"They say that Gilead shall fall into thy hand."

X.

Now Ahab would indeed have been most glad

To follow the advice which met his ear;
If good Micaiah's scornful bearing had

Not plainly told Jehoshaphat, then near,
That what he heard was not advice sincere,
But only stern and withering irony.
So Ahab said, as if he held truth dear,
"Again must I demand the truth of thee?"—

How strange, that men should summon one whose face they fear to see!

XI.

Micaiah, towards king Ahab, manifested

Most bitter scorn;—indignant at his lying.

Murmurs arose; but these the seer arrested

With one wave of his hand; and thus replying

Announced king Ahab's doom;—"The winds were sighing

"With a sepulchral and regretful moan

"Over the hills, whereon the dead and dying

"Of Israel's sons were scattered; and the tone

"Was as if heaven had caught, and echoed back, earth's

"groan;

XII.

- "For, cruel war had swept o'er earth again,
- "And loving hearts were weeping o'er the dead.
- "But he who caused the slaying, there was slain;
- "And with his blood the tongues of dogs were red.
- "Yes, Israel on the hills were scattered
- "As sheep without a shepherd; for there he
- "Whose sheep they were had fall'n!" Then Ahab said

To Judah's king; -- "Was not my word to thee

"That he would prophesy no good concerning me?"

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Micaiah heeded not the scornful tone
Of Ahab's words; but wrapped his mantle 'round,
And said;—"I saw Jehovah on His throne;
"And any ala bright arms are still arms and found."

- "And angels bright came near with awe profound;
- "And He to them this question did propound;—
- "'Who shall persuade king Ahab that he go
- "'To war, and perish on the battle-ground
- "'At Ramoth Gilead?" And, bowing low,
- "Many their service offered; but God answered,—'No.'

XIV.

- "At last a spirit from the realms of night,
- "With clouds of thunder 'round his gloomy brow,
- "Approached the throne of ever dazzling light,
- "And boldly offered; and God asked him; -- 'How
- "' Wilt thou persuade the king?'—'Ahab will bow
- "'To priests; and I,' said he, 'will in them all
- "'A lying spirit be.'-God answered,--'Thou
- "'Shalt go; and none thy mission shall recall;
- "'Falsehood king Ahab loves; by falsehood let him fall."

XV.

Micaiah bid the king then not believe
The prophets; "for," said he, "there has been sent
"A lying one among them to deceive."
Then Zedekiah, ever violent,
Struck good Micaiah; saying,—"Which way went
"That lying one from me to speak to thee?"
He answered,—"When thou in bewilderment
"And terror shalt into thy chamber flee,
"O proud son of Chenaanah, thou then shalt see."

XVI.

Then Ahab, to his officers, said,—"Lay

- "Ye hands upon Micaiah, and convey
- "Him unto Amon and to Joash; they
- "Will rule while I'm in Syria; and say;—
- "'Imprison ye this fellow till the day
- "'When I return and sheath in peace my sword."

But good Micaiah said when led away ;-

- "If thou return at all in peace, the Lord
- "Speaks not by me. Ho! men; do ye my words record."

XVII.

Then far and near was sounded through the coasts
Of Israel the battle-cry, "To arms!"
And thousands flocked to swell the mighty hosts
Which gathered there to scatter war's alarms
Through happy peaceful homes, where woman's charms
And tottering age and helpless infancy
Would fall a sacrifice, that victory's palms
Might wave above the conquerors. Ah, me!
That men should glory in each other's misery.

XVIII.

The armies met at Gilead; and there
King Ahab heard a prisoner relate
That Syria's king had made his captains swear
That they would fight with neither small nor great
Save with the object of their mortal hate,—
Ahab himself. He told not this; but said
To Judah's king;—"Put on thy robes of state;
"And take the post of honour in my stead;
"And I and mine will be by thee to victory led."

XIX.

Thus with base treachery did he pretend

The highest honour to his friend to show,
In order to draw down upon that friend

The cruel wrath of an enragéd foe;
And so himself escape death's threatened blow.

And nearly did the stratagem succeed;
But there is One, whose eyes no slumber know:
He saw the treacherously selfish deed,
And righteously, and graciously, He otherwise decreed.

XX.

As swiftly as an avalanche of snow,

By lightest wind from mountain summit freed,

Comes thundering down into the vale below,

With force not even forests can impede;

So came those captains; each on milk-white steed,

The foam from off whose flanks in flakes was flying;

So furious and headlong was their speed

As on they rushed, the sword and spear defying.—

Beneath them fell their foes;—behind them groaned the dying.

XXI.

Not that those captains fought with those who fell;
With none they fought; but as they onward dashed
With whirlwind speed, and with terrific yell;
They drew their swords,—a moment, high they flashed;
Then 'neath each blow, fell some proud foe, headless or gashed.—

'Twas as with us in boyhood's reckless hours,
When, switch in hand, on right and left we slashed,
And in the wildness of our life's young powers,
Struck down in very wantonness the wayside flowers.

XXII.

Jehoshaphat, who led the host to war,
Being arrayed in gorgeous robes of state,
Was, by those Syrians, mistaken for
The object of their fierce and deadly hate.
They having vowed that not with small nor great,
Save only with king Ahab, would they fight;
Dashed at Jehoshaphat, confederate
To slay him; but he met them in their might;
And proud his eye; and this his cry,—"Now God defend
"the right!"

XXIII.

But being pressed by numbers, he retreated;
Yet battled still, and still his foes defied.
Never had he known fear nor been defeated;

Never from face of foe turned he aside.

"Never rield these Ababa wield!" at least these

- "Now yield thee, Ahab; yield!"—at length they cried;
- "Or we will stretch thee lifeless on the field,
- "By one united blow." But he replied,—
- "I am not Ahab; neither will I yield
- "While yet this well-skilled arm my trusty sword can wield."

XXIV.

Their bright Damascus blades in sunlight flashing,
While, in retreat, Jehoshaphat contended,
Were suddenly arrested ere in crashing
Death blows on his helmet they descended.
Unconsciously his bold words had defended
The valiant life he seemed to throw away;
For, when those Syrian captains apprehended
The truth, that he was not king Ahab, they,
Their oath remembering, turned elsewhere to seek their prey.

XXV.

And how, with Ahab, fared it in the fray?

Did he escape the doom predicted? No.

There's no escape when called by God away:

Willing or not, at his call we must go;

And ere the sun had set king Ahab found it so.

Disguised he was, but 'twas of no avail;—

A certain man at venture drew a bow;

And He, whose purposes can never fail,

Made that chance arrow pierce king Ahab's coat of mail.

XXVI.

He, sinking, said unto his charioteer,
"Turn thou thy hand, and bear me from the host,
"For I am wounded and would reach the rear."
Twas vain; he could not from that fatal post
Escape, for there the battle raged the most.
Dread thunder pealed, as if his cries to drown;
And black clouds, while he yielded up the ghost,
Gathered, and darkened heav'n into a frown;
And Ahab died at evening, when the sun went down.

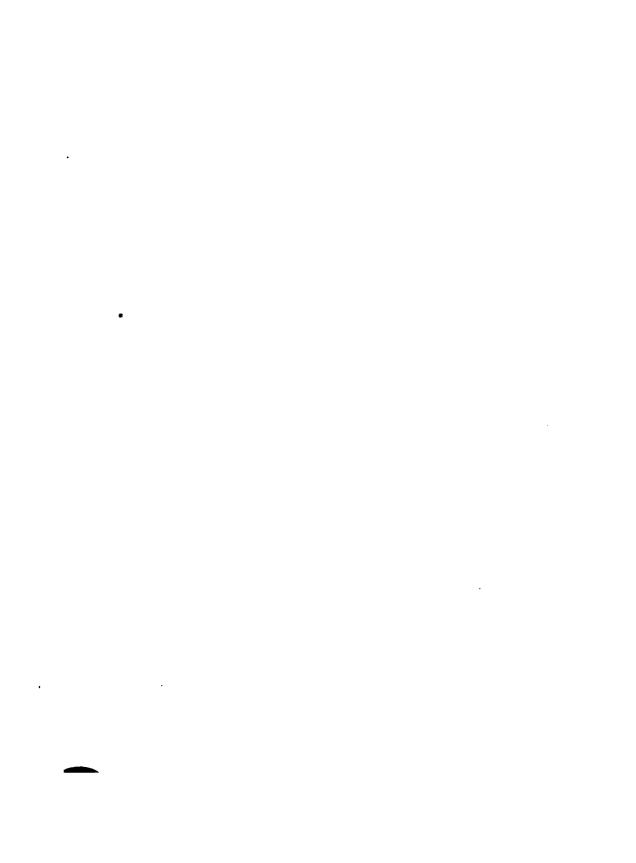
XXVII.

Soon shone the stars in triumph o'er the scene;
Soon rose the moon and filled the world with light;
Joyous as if some cloud that rolled between
Heaven and earth, had vanished from her sight.
Still fiercely fought those hosts in armour bright;
But when 'twas known that Ahab was no more,
Shrilly the trumpets bade them cease the fight:
And Ahab's corpse, all weltering in its gore,
The Israelites away unto Samaria bore.

XXVIII.

Thus perished Ahab; and no eyes were dim
With grief that he o'er Israel ceased to rule.
It might indeed be truly said of him;
That although taught in Wisdom's highest school,—
Prophets, his teachers;—yet he died a fool!
Into his chariot his life's warm flood
Poured its full tide; and in Samaria's pool
They washed it out; and, from the sickening mud,
The prowling ravenous dogs licked up his clotted blood.

END OF SEVENTH CANTO.



Canto Eighth.

"Heaghen unto me, ye men of understanding: Han be it from God, that He should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity. Hon the work of a man shall He genden unto him, and cause every man to find according to His ways."—Job xxxiv, 10, 11.

I.

Dark, dark, all dark; no smiling stars above,

Nor any light around here can I see.—

No gentle words of home, or hope, or love,

Are written on this page of history.

Yet let us read it; it is well to be

Familiar with the truths the past conveys;

And we may find its dense obscurity

The black foil throwing out the gems which blaze

Upon the signet-ring of Time in these our days.

П.

O friend, let us be thankful that we live
Under a sovereign who deserves our praise;
A queen who, for the homage that we give,
Gives us her heart; and love with love repays.
A nation's strength her gentle will obeys;
A nation's pride enshrines her in its heart;
A nation's smile, like heaven's sunny rays,
Falls on her path; and when she shall depart,
Millions of bitter tears from loving eyes will start.

III.

To Ahab's throne king Ahab's son succeeded;
And such as was his father, such was he;
The threatenings of God he little heeded;
Yet crouched, a slave to base idolatry.
Fearing where no fear was, he came to be
Despised by those who lived beneath his sway.—
The Moabites from his authority
Broke, like a flood that sweepeth all away,
And laughed at those who strove their freedom's course to stay.

v.

Conciliation, Israel tried not, for,
That course was too revolting to their pride.

Nor went their vain weak monarch to the war,
To try by force to stem rebellion's tide.

No; fearing death, he staid at home,—yet died.

Ah! there are dangers quite as great as those
Which in fell war the fate of men decide.

What is thy duty? Do thou that.—God knows
Where it is best that thou thy mortal life shouldst close.

V.

Now while the men of Israel took the field,
To crush the pow'r that in rebellion rose;
The king, instead of going forth to wield
The sword against his people's deadly foes,
And lead his warriors to victory; chose
To act the part of coward, and of slave.
He, slothfully indulgent, sought repose!—
God oft, in judgment, gives men what they crave,
And gave to him repose;—but it was in the grave.

VI.

Lounging in listless idleness, he fell
Through open casement from an upper room;
And in his agony, most sad to tell,
Sent messengers to Baalzebub; whom
They should consult as to their monarch's doom,
And bring him word again. Alas, that he
Should seek from stones the secrets of the tomb!
But men who do not God believe, will be
Ever the easiest dupes of weak credulity.

VII.

Unto Elijah, from high heaven was sent
An angel of Jehovah, thus to say;—

"Go meet Samaria's messengers that went
"From Israel's king; behold they're in the way
"That leads to Ekron. Say thou to them, 'Stay!

- "'Return, and to your monarch instantly
- "'This message from the King of kings convey;-
- "'Because My chastisements thou wilt not see;
- "'But boldly dost proclaim thy disbelief in Me

awaited.

VIII.

"'By thus to Baal in thy trouble crying;
"'Know that most certainly from off that bed,
"'Where thou in mortal agony art lying,
"'Rise, thou shalt not, until thy soul hath fled,
"'And thou, O king, art numbered with the dead.'"
Then went Elijah down to them, and stated
What God had, by his angel, to him said;
And they returned, and to the king related
The solemn word that they had heard, and his commands

IX.

Then, when he understood why they returned
Ere reaching Ekron, his exhausted frame
Was so convulsed by rage, that fever burned
His brain almost to madness; and the flame
Of fury fired his eyes till they became
Wild with demoniac brightness, as he cried;—
"Who was the man that met you; what his name?
"By all the gods whom he has thus defied,
"The earth with his accurséd life's-blood shall this day be
"dyed."

X.

They said,—"He was of venerable age;

- "His garment goats' skins; around which he wore
- "A leathern belt." "By Baal! 'tis the sage
- "Elijah!" said the king. "In days of yore
- "He troubled Israel, and now, once more,
- "He comes with daring menaces, and lies!
- "By all the gods of Israel! as I swore,
- "So shall it be;—this very day he dies;
- "And we will see if that shall be, of which he prophecies."

XI.

A captain with his fifty then was sent

To seize the seer and quickly bring him bound

Before the king. Like hounds of hell they went,

Yelling most horrid curses, and soon found

The prophet on the steeply rising ground

Outside the walls; and said with virulence

Of hatred, and a withering scorn that crowned

With tenfold aggravation their offence;—

"Thou man of God, thus saith the king, 'Come down from

"'thence.'"



XII,

"If, that I am a man of God, be true"
Said he, "let lightning scath you with its flame;"
And swift from heaven God's vengeful lightning flew;
And such its deadly and unerring aim,
That instantly the company became
A heap of blackened corpses. Then the king,
Enraged, sent others; but, alas, the same
Dread fate, upon themselves, did they, too, bring;
And lo! one hundred bodies there lay smouldering.

XIII.

When this to Israel's monarch was made known,
He foamed with fury. What! Should he be thwarted;
Never!—By Baal and his fiery throne,
The sun; and by the clouds which him escorted;
He swore that though all earth and heav'n consorted
With that intent, no force his arm should stay.
And, with a countenance by rage distorted,
He looked around, and scowling seemed to say;
"Woe to that man who my command shall dare to disobey."

XIV.

Dread orders from his quivering lips then burst,
As bursts the thunder from volcano, rent
By fiercely raging fires, which it has nursed
E'en to explosiveness; and forth he sent
Command for fifty more. They, with their captain, went,
The wrathful message of their king conveying;
But, wiser for the past, these humbly bent
Before Elijah, and besought him; saying,
"O man of God, thy servants come before thee praying,

XV.

- "That their lives may be precious in thy sight.
- "Behold, there came down fire from heaven slaying
- "The former fifties with their captains; smite
- "Not us we pray thee, who are but obeying
- "The king's command." An angel then, arraying Himself in form invisible, drew near; And, only by his gracious words betraying His presence, said unto the mighty seer,—
- "Hail! man of God. Go down; and at the court appear."

XVI.

Then to the king of Israel he went;
And in his presence boldly standing, said;—

- "Because thou hast to Baalzebub sent
- "To ask his aid; and lo! encouragéd
- "By thy example, Israel is led
- "Into still deeper sin, thus saith the High
- "And Mighty One of Hosts,—'From off that bed,
- "'Where thou in all that agony dost lie,
- "'Thou shalt not rise again, but there shalt surely die."

XVII.

He would have answered, but the hand of Death Locked up his jaws;—a blasphemy half uttered Died on his lips; and with his failing breath The name of Jezebel he feebly muttered; Then like a taper which the blast has guttered, He quickly wasted till the waning light Of life within him, in its socket fluttered; And the recording angel took his flight, Leaving the ruined soul in everlasting night.

END OF EIGHTH CANTO.

Canto Minth.

"And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, thus saith the Lord God, Remove the diadem, and take off the crown."—EZEKIEL xxi, 25, 26.

I.

Thus Ahab's first-born died; and many a one
More freely breathed, when he drew breath no more.
All feared him while he lived; and there was none
That thanked not God his cruel life was o'er.
Yes, such the hateful character he bore,
None loved him living, and none mourned him dead.
Death, with rude hand, from off that stern brow tore
The crown which might have graced the monarch's head;
And, as he childless died, his brother reigned instead.

п.

In Judah's palace too, Death's hand had been;
And the good king Jehoshaphat had died,
Leaving his wealth of precious things between
His younger sons; and cities too, beside;
While to his first-born, once his joy and pride,
He gave the kingdom. But, alas! that son
All the fair promise of his youth belied,
By madly giving heart and hand to one
Whom all the wise and good had warned him well, to shun.

ш.

The wily Jezebel entrapped the prince;
And for her daughter thus secured a throne;
Nor failed that daughter's spirit to evince
Under whose eye it was that she had grown
To womanhood. Example oft has sown
The seeds of sin; but here was teaching brought
Into conjunction with example, known
To be for evil; and the soul was caught;
And Jezebel, her child Athaliah's ruin wrought.

IV.

Over that bud, which in life's spring-time grew,
A thing of beauty in that sunny clime,
Drinking in joy, as flowers drink the dew,
Queen Jezebel soon trailed the deadly slime
Of her most foul example; and in time
That bud became a withered, blighted thing.—
Athaliah's heart, familiar long with crime,
Shrank not from any deed that seemed to bring
Promise of present gain to her and to the king.

v.

And now was done a deed for execration;—
A fratricidal deed of blackest guilt.
The king of Judah, at the instigation
Of Jezebel and queen Athaliah, spilt
The life's-blood of his brothers!—to the hilt
Burying the murderous sword in each young breast,
From lust of gold. Alas! his heart had built
Itself a palace with their wealth;—the rest
Followed, as follows crime when lust becomes a guest.

VI.

That which at first was but an idle thought,
Became, by being cherished, sin's beginning.
O be thou watchful; and ne'er think it nought
To entertain the mere idea of sinning.
The heart is soon enticed; and lust is winning;
And if sin be not hated, thou wilt find
Its slender threads of thought thy brain was spinning
Have twined themselves into a cord, and bind
Thee hand and foot; and never, but by God, can be untwined.

VII.

There's not a thought that passes through the brain;
There's not a deed however darkly done;
There's not the smallest drop of falling rain;
Or veriest atom hid from noonday sun,
But is observed by the Omniscient One.
We cannot turn His piercing glance aside;
We cannot its all-seeing brightness shun;
Nor from God's wrath could king Jehoram hide,
When by his murderous hands, his six young brothers died.

vm.

A runner stands before the city walls,
And summons, to the massive brazen gates,
The guard on watch; he, answering him who calls,
Demands why so impatiently he waits;
And he replying, thus his mission states;—
"These ponderous portals quickly open fling;
"I bear a secret message which relates
"To matters of great moment to the king;
"Do thou me instantly into his presence bring."

IX.

'Tis done; before Jehoram now he stands;
And boldly, yet with reverence, drawing near,
Delivers into those blood-guilty hands
A writing from Elijah. With severe
And haughty mien, albeit pale with fear,
The trembling monarch takes the scroll and reads.—
"Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, into whose ear
"The cry of blood has come,—'Justice empleads
"'Thee, and calls out for vengeance for thy cruel deeds.

X.

"'Thy father walked before me; he is dead,

"'And now in heaven reaps his bright reward;

"'And thou art risen in thy father's stead,

"'And walkest earth a thing accursed, abhorred.

"'Perish the power that governs by the sword!

"'Because thou hadst no pity, but didst slay

"'Thy little brothers; know this from the Lord,—

"'Disease shall seize thy bowels until they

"'Fall out, by reason of thy sickness, day by day."

XI.

He tried to smile, but fear retained its place,
And stamped its image on his features still;
For every muscle of that ghastly face
Rebelled against the motions of his will.
Ill was the monarch's heart at ease, and ill
Concealed he it, though with defiant tone
He said,—"No threats shall me with terror fill.
"Life is a bubble by some chance breath blown;
"And death,—that bubble's bursting.—Nothing more is
"known."

XII.

He sent the messenger away, and strove
The message to forget, but strove in vain;—
Where e'er he was; in citadel, or grove;
Upon the throne, or on the tented plain;
The prophet's message ever and again
Would mar his joys, and haunt his dreams by night.
It was a burning fever in his brain;—
On all his hopes, a mildew and a blight;—
A blood-stained sword that ever flashed before his sight.

XIII.

The gold which he by murder had acquired
Brought not with it the joy that he had thought;—
Peace fled his conscience; and his wealth soon fired
The ambition of the Arab tribes, and brought
The Philistines 'gainst Judah; and they fought
With king Jehoram, and at once bereft
Him of his wealth, his wives, and sons; and taught
Him, God is just;—their battle-axes cleft
The skulls of all his children, save the youngest; him they left.

XIV.

And then God smote him with a dire disease

Through which he lingered two long weary years

In anguish and remorse, and by degrees

Died, tortured with a thousand boding fears.

Dread cries for vengeance ever filled his ears.—

His murdered brothers' voices seemed to greet him;

As he remembered their sad piteous tears

When, for dear life, in vain did they entreat him;

And now their spectral forms seemed rising up to meet him.

XV.

He passed away;—a curtain falls and hides
The dark unknown beyond, from human gaze;
And no one, who in mortal form abides,
That all impenetrable veil can raise.
Death, on the lips of the departed, lays
His icy finger; but thus much we know,—
It is with all according to their ways;
We reap hereafter that which now we sow.
Yes! ever as the countless ages flow,
Man's good or ill is followed still, by weal, or woe.

XVI.

His youngest son ascended then the throne,
The elder children having all been slain
By the Arabians who, as has been shown,
Invaded Judah in Jehoram's reign.
The youthful monarch neither sought to gain
Jehovah's favour, nor to know His laws;
Much less sought he the blessing to attain
Of worshipping with love the First Great Cause;
He lived for earth alone; his God, this world's applause.

XVII.

Joining the house of Ahab in a war
'Gainst Hazael king of Syria, he went
To Ramoth Gilead to battle; for,
His mother, to that ill-starred project, lent
Her potent evil influence, and he bent
Before her words, as a young sapling bends
Before the blast which, through the firmament,
The howling storm-fiend as his herald sends,
Ere with his lightnings he the oak in fury rends.

XVIII.

'Round Ramoth Gilead rolled war's foaming tide,
And loudly did the angry billows roar;
But she the vengeance of her foes defied,
And hurled them back all broken as of yore.
There Ahab, years before, had in his gore
Lain weltering when his life fast ebbed away.
And now his son, too, there was wounded sore;
For Hazael, like a hunted beast of prey,
Sprang from his savage lair, and kept his foes at bay.

XIX.

Then Joram, king of Israel, returned
To Jezreel from Mount Gilead to be healed
Of the fierce fever which within him burned
From those his wounds; for although he was steeled
In triple armour, 'twas a useless shield
Against the subtile arrows of the foe.—
All faint and feeble he was forced to yield
To Ahaziah's arguments and go,
Leaving to him the task of laying Ramoth low.

XX.

Long time the siege continued, but the king
Of Israel returned not to the host;
Health by degrees he was recovering,
But the full strength, of which he once could boast
He had not yet regained. Therefore his post
King Ahaziah in the war resigned
Unto the captains whom he trusted most,
And went to see king Joram who repined,
A weary broken man, one crushed in heart and mind.

XXI.

He, turning not in his all-cheerless grief
To Him who only can sweet peace bestow,
Found not the solace of that true relief
Which springs from trusting God in time of woe.
Alas! alas!—when God doth love us so,
And o'er us with a father's heart doth yearn,
Entreating us to come to Him and know
The riches of His grace;—that we should turn
Away in senseless pride and all His mercies spurn!

END OF NINTH CANTO.



Canto Tenth.

"As I live, saith the Loud God, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee; sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee."—EZEKIEL XXXV, 6.

I.

There is no limit to God's wondrous love
As exercised towards His creature, man.
'Tis patient, and it suffers long, above
All human thought; but some, who blindly scan
Only a part of God's all-righteous plan
Of government, insist that love alone
Is there. Now, while admitting, as we can,
That God is love indeed; we still must own
That righteousness and judgment are before His throne;

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And o'er that throne there is a rainbow bent,
Which tells us, God is true;—true equally
In threat'nings and in promises. Repent
For God is merciful. Repent for He
Is just. He swore that the posterity
Of Ahab should from earth be swept away,
And Jezebel be cut off in her infamy.—
And when He drew His glittering sword to slay,
The queen and priests and princes perished on that day.

m.

Elijah to Elisha this word spake;

First telling what on Horeb he had heard ;-

- "Command that, from the prophets' school, one take
- "This box of oil, his flowing garment gird
- "Around his loins; and, by no fear deterred,
- "Go boldly down unto the battle field,
- "And there anoint, according to God's word,
- "Jehu as king; let him the sceptre wield;
- "Himself the sword of God, and God Himself his shield."

IV.

Elisha then, to one of the young men
Who studied in the prophets' school, thus spake;—
"Go down to Ramoth Gilead, and when
"Thou comest to the captains, thou shalt make
"Jehu arise and follow thee; then take
"Him to an inner chamber, but to what
"Intent, let him not know; this box then break,
"And there anoint him king, upon the spot;

"Then open thou the door and flee, and tarry not."

v.

To Ramoth then the young man went, and found The captains of the host in council seated; And boldly entering, he looked around, And upon Jehu fixed his eyes, and greeted Him with the words Elisha had repeated, Saying, "I have a message unto thee." Then Jehu 'rose and the young man retreated Into an inner room for secrecy, And Jehu said, "What is thy message unto me?"

VI.

He said, "Thus saith Jehovah, 'Be thou king

- "'Over my people Israel; and smite
- "'Thy master to the earth, and swiftly bring
- "'Death to all Ahab's sons, and thus requite
- "'The blood of martyred prophets. Let life's light
- "'In Baal's priests too, who adore the sun,
- "'Be quenched in death and in eternal night.
- "'They worship light, yet that of truth, they shun,
- "'And blackness of thick darkness for themselves have won.

VII.

- "'And where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, e'en there
- "'Shall Jezebel, in death's throes, clench her teeth,
- "'While dogs, from off her bones, the flesh shall tear.'-
- "The cause is God's; thou wearest valour's wreath;
- "Draw then the sword of vengeance from its sheath!"

Then pouréd he the oil on Jehu's head;

And, like one who has fired a mine beneath

The very chamber where his footsteps tread,

He open flung the door, and gat him out and fled.

VIII.

Jehu awhile stood fixed as by a spell,
And then returned and took again his seat.
One there inquired of him if all was well;
And then said, "Ah! what is this scent so sweet?
"This oil, too, on thy head, thy robe, thy feet?
"And what that madman's word?" He answering,
"Ye know his words; why should I them repeat?"
They said, "Tis false! now tell us of this thing."
Then Jehu boldly said, "God doth anoint me king."

IX.

At once each captain sprang up from his seat,
And in enthusiastic gladness threw
His flowing garment down at Jehu's feet
In token of subjection; and then flew
Unto the open stair-top, and there blew
The trumpets by which they were wont to bring
The tribes together; thus a concourse drew,
Then cried, with shouts which made the city ring,
"Jehu reigns over Israel; God save the king."

X.

Now Jehu was a man whose soul was fired
With dauntless courage and with burning zeal;
And, to the captains who with him conspired,
He said, "Since this is for the common weal,
"Let none go forth to tell it in Jezreel
"Until this righteous work shall be completed
"By Joram's death. Silence must all lips seal;—
"No thought be uttered, and no word repeated
"To any, lest our plans should haply be defeated."

XI.

Then mounted he his chariot and rode
With furious speed, as he did ever ride.—
Afar, on Jezreel's tower, a watchman strode,—
Turned,—stopped,—and shading then his eyes, espied
The cavalcade of Jehu; and he cried,
"Behold, a company!" King Joram, for
He, too, had seen the cloud of dust, replied,
"From Ramoth Gilead they're coming, or
"Mine eyes deceive me; and, with tidings of the war.

XII.

"Send out a horseman; bid him ride to meet
"The approaching cavalcade, and thus inquire;—
"'Is it with news of peace ye come to greet
"'My lord the king; or bring ye tidings dire
"'Of heavy loss or of defeat?'"—The fire,
From prancing horses' hoofs below, was flashing;
And, quick as was expressed the king's desire,
An Arab steed from out the gate was dashing,
Proud of its rider as away it sped;
While he, as proud of it, caressed its noble head.

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He met the approaching cavalcade, and there
Reined in his steed, and wheeling round, inquired
As now with them he dashed along, "Say, bear
"Ye news of glorious peace, so long desired?"
Jehu, who 'gainst the king's life had conspired,
Drew up his horse with quickly tightened rein,
Scowled fiercely upon him whose words had fired
His rage, and said, "Speak not of peace again!
"'War to the death' 's the cry now; follow in my train."

XIV.

The sentinel on Jezreel's tower reported,—
"He came to them but cometh not again."
"Another send," said Joram; and there snorted
A noble steed that longed to paw the plain;
His neck was curved in pride, and every vein
In that sleek skin told of a mighty heart;
And o'er his eye, so full, a jet-black mane
Luxuriantly fell, but only to impart
More brilliance to the rays which through it seemed to dart.

XV.

Over his head his rider 's seen to bow,

Stroke his arched neck, and whisper in his ear.—

Away, away he bears that rider now

To meet the dreaded horsemen drawing near.

Again the question, and again the clear

Bold voice which orders that all words shall cease;

And now the watchman, with a face of fear,

Reports, "He too, but serveth to increase
"The company that comes. Can it indeed be peace?



XVI.

"The driving of the foremost seems to be
"Like that of Jehu, the all-daring son
"Of Nimshi, for he driveth furiously;
"And ill's behind when he's the foremost one."—
"Make ready, then!" said Joram.—It was done;
And the two kings, each in his chariot,
Went forth; and Jehu, never known to shun
The face of any, met them in the plot
Of ground that once formed part of martyred Naboth's lot.

XVII.

Fear-stricken Joram grasped his keen sword's hilt
And askéd, "Is it peace, O captains true?"

"What peace," said Jehu, "while thy mother's guilt

"Cries from this field to God?" Then Joram knew

His own and Ahaziah's fate, and threw

His hands up, and cried, "Treachery!" and fled.

But Jehu, firm of purpose, swiftly drew

A bow with his full strength;—the arrow sped

Straight to its destined mark, and Joram fell down dead.

XVIII.

"Unto the ravenous dogs and birds of prey,"
Said Jehu unto Bidkar hurrying past him;
For dost thou not remember on that day
When thou and I together rode this way
After his father, Ahab, God empowered
Elijah and commissioned him to say,
"Where stones on righteous Naboth's head were showered,
"There, by the fowls of heaven, shall thy seed be devoured!"

XIX.

When Ahaziah king of Judah saw
The fatal arrow, and heard Joram's scream
Of death, instead of feeling roused to draw
The sword of vengeance for his friend, 'twould seem
He fled in terror across Kishon's stream;
And Jehu to his bold companions cried,
"Follow and smite him!" And when near Ibleam,
One with a javelin smote him in the side;—
Wounded, he fled unto Megiddo, and there died.

XX.

When Jezebel, then staying at Jezreel,
Heard in the palace all that had been done,
She, proud to show how little she could feel
Even the murder of the king, her son,
Painted her eyes, and tired her head, like one
Wholly regardless of her children's fate.
No grief knew she, nor sought men's gaze to shun,
But at an open window sat in state,
While dogs devoured her son before the palace gate!

XXI.

Jehu then entering, she cried aloud,

"Had Zimri peace, who erst his master slew?"

Jehu looked up, and in his spirit vowed,

"Thou too shalt meet the death that is thy due!"

"Who is on my side?" cried he.—Bold and true

Two or three eunuchs answered in a breath,

"I," "I."—"Then throw her down here." And they threw

Her swiftly down, and sacred history saith

That Jehu's pow'rful courser trampled her to death.

XXII.

Then went he in to eat, but turned to say,

"That curséd woman, being a king's daughter,

"See now and bury her." They went their way,

But came back saying they in vain had sought her;—

Of her who perished at that place of slaughter,

Skull, feet, and hands alone remained to tell

The fearful end to which her crimes had brought her.

Upon the very spot where Naboth fell,

There she to wolf-like dogs became a prey;—

Her flesh they ate; her bones they dragged away

Into the fields; and not a man could pay

Her even funeral honours, or could say,—

"Lo! this is Jezebel."

END OF TENTH CANTO.

Canto Elebenth.

"The destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed."—ISAIAH i, 28.

I.

Ahab had in Samaria seventy sons;

And Jehu sent unto the elders who

Had charge of them, a letter which thus runs;-

- "Seeing there are your master's sons with you,
- "And horses, chariots, and armour too,
- "And a strong fencéd city; make it known
- "Whom ye anoint as king. This quickly do;
- "And when ye thus your loyalty have shown,
- "Fight for your master's house, his kingdom and his throne."

11.

Then were they all exceedingly afraid,
And said, "Behold, two kings stood not before him;

- "How then should we stand, even if we made
- "The mightiest prince amongst us ruler o'er him?
- "He rules already; let us not ignore him,
- "Nor dare so fierce a spirit to despise.
- "We'll make no king; but, writing, thus implore him,-
- "'O mighty Jehu, thou alone art wise;
- "'Thy servants ask to do what seems good in thine eyes."

ш.

A second time he wrote unto them, saying,—
"If ye indeed are mine, then this do ye;—
"Show your allegiance and zeal by slaying
"Your master's sons, and bringing unto me
"Their heads to-morrow night." Obediently,
The elders drew their swords of keenest steel;
And seventy headless, quivering bodies,—see
There in one ghastly heap! O bloody zeal!—
The frightful heads are sent in baskets to Jezreel.

IV.

A messenger reported in the ear
Of Jehu,—"I'm commissioned, Sire, to state,
"That they have brought the heads!"—No trace of fear
Or grief was shown by Jehu.—"'Tis now late;"
Said he, "pile them in two heaps by the gate
"Till dawn of day." 'Tis done as Jehu bids;
And there are heads with fiendish stare of hate,—
Heads, too, whose glazed eyes peer through half-closed lids,—
And heads—but I refrain.—They formed two pyramids.

v.

When daylight dawned, the people gathered round The sickening spectacle; and Jehu came And said unto the crowd whom there he found, "Ye Israelites, in whose eyes leaps the flame "Of indignation at this deed, I claim

- "Your patient hearing. I, 'tis true, conspired
- "And slew my master; but let justice blame
- "Some other hand for this.—Your souls are fired
- "With rage; and righteous anger is to be admired.

VI.

- "But learn ye wisely to discriminate
- "Between a deed of reckless butchery
- "Which should excite your horror and your hate,
- "And a just act of retribution. We
- "See here the fall of Ahab's house; but he
- "O'er Naboth's house by cruelty prevailed;
- "And even as Elijah said 'twould be,
- "So has it come to pass;—no jot has failed;—
- "On Ahab's house the fate of Naboth's was entailed."

VII.

The crowd departed, brooding o'er the deed;
And Jehu then, his kingship to proclaim,
Rode to Samaria, at swiftest speed;
And upon Ahaziah's brethren came,
Hard by the shearing house, and asked the aim
And object of their journey,—"We," said they,
"Go down to see king Joram." At that name
Jehu said to his followers, "Seize and slay!"
No second word those princes heard,—their corpses strewed
the way.

VIII.

Departing thence he chances soon to light
On Jonadab the son of Rechab. See,
They stop; and Jehu says,—"Is thy heart right,
"As my heart is with thy heart? If it be
"Give me thy hand." "Most heartily," said he.
King Jehu now to Jonadab extends
The hand of friendship, and says, "Come with me,
"And see my zeal for God." And now the friends
Dash o'er the plain, nor tighten rein until their journey ends.

IX.

As Jehu's chariot through the gateway curved, He said unto the nobles by the wall,

- "Baal by Ahab was but little served;
- "Jehu shall serve him much. Now therefore call
- "Unto me all of Baal's prophets, all
- "His servants, all his priests, and let there none
- "Absent himself; for wrath shall surely fall
- "In sternest punishment on any one
- "Who is not there, to bow in prayer, at set of sun.

X.

"I have a mighty sacrifice to do
"To Baal." But he spoke deceitfully,
Detesting Baal and the priesthood too;
And had resolved the holocaust should be
The priests themselves; their cry of agony
In death, an awful wailing which should swell
The requiem service of their deity;
And Baal's falling house should sound the knell
Of Baal's idol worship throughout Israel.

XI.

Therefore he charged the heralds to proclaim
His order throughout Israel; and they went
And everywhere proclaimed it. And all came,—
Prophets and priests,—none daring to absent
Himself, for each one feared the punishment
Denounced 'gainst whomsoever should offend.
And now, upon the coming scene intent,
Prophets and priests in crowds the hill ascend,
And soon is Baal's temple filled from end to end.

XII.

To him that kept the vestry, Jehu said,

"Bring forth the vestments for the priests." 'Twas done;
And like an army of the sheeted dead,
They filled the silent Temple of the Sun.

"Search well," said Jehu, "that there may be none

"Among you, of the servants of the Lord."
They searched and answered that there was not one.
Then Jehu, who their sacrifice abhorred,
Appointed fourscore men without who drew the sword;

XIII.

And said to them, "If any whom I've brought
"Into your hands, escape; who lets him go,
"Forfeits his own life." Quick as flashed the thought,
They drew their swords and answered, "Be it so!"
And fired the temple o'er the priests. The glow
Of the red flames which roaring rose to tell
The deed of blood, was seen afar; when lo!
With crash of thunder the vast temple fell,
And Baal's worship was destroyed in Israel.

END OF ELEVENTH CANTO.



Canto Twelfth.

" Say ye to the nighteous, that it shall be well with him."—Isaiah iii, 10.

I.

- "HAIL! Mighty Prophet, Consecrated Flame
- "Burning before the High and Lofty One
- "Inhabiting Eternity, whose name
- "Alone is God, thy work on earth is done;-
- "In ashes lies the Temple of the Sun;
- "The rites of Baal's priesthood, too, are o'er,
- "For Baal's priests have perished, and there's none,
- "Of Ahab's house remaining. As God swore,
- "So has it come to pass. Be humble, and adore.

IL.

"Lo, God, Himself, His chariot has sent
"To carry thee in triumph to the skies."
So spake The Spirit; and Elijah bent
In lowly reverence, and veiled his eyes
Before the dazzling Presence. "Rise, O, rise;"
The Spirit said, "and for thy crown prepare;
"The battle's fought, and thine's the victor's prize;
"The chariot waits; Heaven's coursers paw the air,
"Impatient to descend, and thee from earth to bear."

Ш.

"Is it a dream?" Elijah said; "O, no!

"Oft have I heard that loving voice before.—

"Blest Spirit, I am Thine, and long to go;

"Lead where Thou wilt, I'll follow and adore."

The vision passed away; and slowly o'er

The prophet, did the truth its rainbow bend;—

Broken at first and faint, but as he more

And more its perfect arc could comprehend,

The hues of love in heaven above, with earth's light seemed to blend.

IV.

He sought his friend Elisha, unto whom
He told the wondrous story of God's grace;—
How he, a mortal, should escape the tomb,
And be, by fiery steeds, through realms of space
Borne upward till before Jehovah's face
He took his stand for ever. No faltering breath,
No sigh of death, no sorrow should he know.
Changed in his flight; a glorious robe of light
Would instantly around his spirit flow.

v.

- "Farewell, Elisha"; said the mighty seer,
- "Be faithful to the cause I leave with thee.
- "Jehovah liveth; thou hast naught to fear;
- "Be valiant for the truth."—"I will"; said he,
- "But must we say Farewell so soon?—Ah, me!
- "Life is a vapour; and our lives for years
- "Have sweetly blended; -now, alas; 'twill be
- "That one, exhaled, in sunlight disappears;—
- "The other, chilled by sorrow, is dissolved in tears.

VI.

- "I'll leave thee not; wherever thou dost go,
- "Faithful, I will be with thee to the end;
- "How much this heart hath loved thee, thou dost know;
- "And thou hast ever been to me a friend.
- "God is all-wise; and to His will I bend;
- "But O, 'tis hard to part from one so dear.
- "Though thou art called, to glory to ascend,
- "My selfish heart would still detain thee here,
- "For life without thy friendship were a desert drear."-

VII.

- "Elisha, there is happiness above;
- "Calm thou thy spirit, and its griefs restrain;
- "Where God Himself is, and where all is love,
- "We yet in His good time shall meet again.
- "Farewell! Thou must not me detain;
- "God works in love, in love doth He bereave thee."-
- "Most true; but O, thou comfortest in vain;"
- Elisha said, "for worlds I would not grieve thee;
- "But, as Jehovah lives, I cannot, will not, leave thee."

VIII.

Then down to Bethel did the two friends go; And children of the prophets came; and they Unto Elisha said, "Ah! dost thou know,

- "The God of Israel will take away
- "Thy lord and master from thy head to day?"—
- "Wake not my grief," said he; "the truest token
- "Of sympathy is silence; therefore lay
- "Your hands upon your mouths; for when the spirit's broken,
- "The kindest words of love are those which are unspoken."

IX.

Again Elijah importuned his friend
To leave him, for he longed to be alone;—
Few were the hours ere summoned to ascend
To heaven, he would stand before God's throne;
Borne thither in His chariot!—None had known
Such honour; and he humbly shunned the gaze
Of mortal man; for he could not but own
Himself unmeet for e'en the faintest rays
Of glory; how much more for its triumphant blaze!

X.

The brightest jewel in the costliest shrines
Where God is worshipped is humility.

'Tis like a star which trembles while it shines;
And, through its trembling, brighter seems to be.—
That jewel, in its purest brilliancy,
Adorned Elijah's character.—With men,
He was a man!—and bowed to none! But he,
Before Jehovah,—was a child; and when
He thought of all God's love to him, he wept again.

XI.

The two friends journeyed down to Jericho;
And there, as 'twas at Bethel, many said
To sorrowing Elisha, "Dost thou know
"That God will take thy master from thy head,
"And that to-day?" Elisha's fond heart bled
As thus he answered them;—"Peace! friends; be wise.
"Words are but harrowing when hope is dead.
"True friendship breathes its sympathy in sighs;
"And love's most loving words are spoken by the eyes."

XII.

Once more Elijah said, "Now stay thou here

- "Elisha, for Jehovah's word is still
- "Onward!" Then answered he, "O friend most dear,
- "Surely I am not thwarting His high will,
- "In clinging to thy presence here until
- "He take thee to Himself. Bid me not go.
- "A little while, and grief my cup will fill,
- "Ev'n till the bitter waters overflow,
- "And the true heart that loves thee is nigh drowned in woe."

XIII.

- "Peace troubled heart! Tis only doubt that sorrows. .
- "Faith, trusting, says, e'en though through falling tears,-
- "'.'Tis God who for a little season borrows
- "'The gift His hand bestowed in bygone years.'
- "O, Gracious God, each loss Thyself endears,
- "For Thee we cannot lose. Thou art the same
- "For ever; and dost gently chide our fears;
- "Telling the grief-crushed heart overwhelmed with shame,
- "That there is hope, for 'I AM' is Thy glorious name.

XIV.

- "'I AM thy Father;—doubt Me not, My child.
- "'I AM thy Friend;—O fly thou not from Me.
- "'I AM thy God;—be not by sin beguiled.
- "'I AM thine All;—I give Myself to thee.
- "'I AM'—the rest is blank, that it may be
- "Filled up by man according to his need.—
- "Trust thou in Him, Elisha; happy he
- "Who, though through griefs which cause his heart to bleed,
- "Learns that the heart of God is merciful indeed.

XV.

- "Now," said Elijah, "tell me, what would'st thou
- "That I should do for thee Elisha? Say,
- "Before God's chariot shall these heavens bow,
- "And in a whirlwind carry me away."-
- "Let there be given unto me, I pray,
- "A double portion of thy spirit; he
- "Whom God appoints as prophet in thy place,
- "Had need, indeed, of God's especial grace."—
- "A great request, but thou mayest rest
- "Assured that if thou see
- "My glorious flight to realms of light,
- "Thy prayer is granted thee."

XVI.

Thus the two prophets talked as down they went
From Jericho to Jordan; whilst on high
Stood fifty men to view the rapt ascent
Of him whose prayer of faith had closed the sky,
Made the swift lightnings as his servants fly,
And raised the dead to life again! The two
Soon reached the Jordan's bank. No boat was nigh;
Nor was one needed;—God had said, "This do,
"Smite thou in faith the waters, and go dryshod through."

XVII.

With joyous faith, honouring the Mighty Giver, Elijah took the mantle from his shoulders; And, folding it together, smote the river Which roaring rushed between great granite boulders Strewn on each bank. The wondering beholders Saw from the height, the waters with affright Rush backward, and there leave a pathway wide. For thus Elijah spoke,—"Jehovah saith,—'Divide!" Hushed was the torrent's roar;—all was as death. Even the swift-wingéd winds held their breath, Till the prophets in safety had reached the far side; When again the wild river rolled on in its pride.

XVIII.

The sun had set, and as they journeyed on
They thought they caught the sound of distant thunder;
Then nearer, clearer; but o'erhead, stars shone,
And on the horizon silvery clouds sailed under
The deep blue sky. With mingled awe and wonder
The prophets turned and, lo! from heav'n there came
A chariot and horses as of flame;
And far off saint-like mountains, with age hoary
And robed in snow, were radiant with the glow
Of that celestial and unutterable glory.

XIX.

Ethereal yet visible; for, bright
Unto intensity through purest light
Indwelling, was that chariot of the skies.
The horses, too, were creatures not of earth;
Their necks were clothed with thunder; and their eyes
Starry with beauty, told of heav'nly birth.
No harness fettered them; no curb nor girth
Restrained the freedom of those glorious ones,

Nor traces yoked the chariot at their heels;
It followed them, as planets follow suns
Through trackless space, in their empyreal courses;
For lo! the fiery spirit of the horses
Was as a mighty presence in the wheels,
And in the dazzling whirlwind which behind them flew
And caught Elijah up, as sunlight drinks the dew.

XX.

Away, away to Heav'n those steeds upbore him;
Leaving the clouds as dust beneath their feet.
Wide open flashed the golden gates before him;
And angel forms of splendour rose to greet
The favoured prophet. Oh, the rapture sweet!
The ecstacy most thrilling which came o'er him!—
But thoughts are voiceless when we soar thus high;
And, like the lark that vainly strives to beat
With little wings the air and pierce the sky,
We fall again to earth. Elisha there
Wept o'er his loss, but wept not in despair.

No; though a few regretful tear-drops fell,
He knew that with Elijah all was well;
For through the open gates of Heaven there rang
Strains of the song of welcome that the angels sang.

XXI.

O who can picture that transcendent sight!
Who fitly can relate the wondrous story;
Who paint the aërial beauty of that night
Or sing the fleetness of those steeds of glory
And God's triumphant chariot of light
Entering Heaven! Never in depth or height
Had mortal gazed on such a scene before;
Never shall years, how long soe'er their flight,
The solemn grandeur of that hour restore,
Till the last thunder echoes "It is done!"
And the archangel, dazzling as the sun,
Descends to earth; and, standing on the shore
Of ages, swears with upraised hand by ONE
Who lived ere time its cycles had begun,
That time shall be no more.

THE END.

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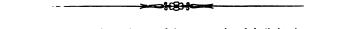
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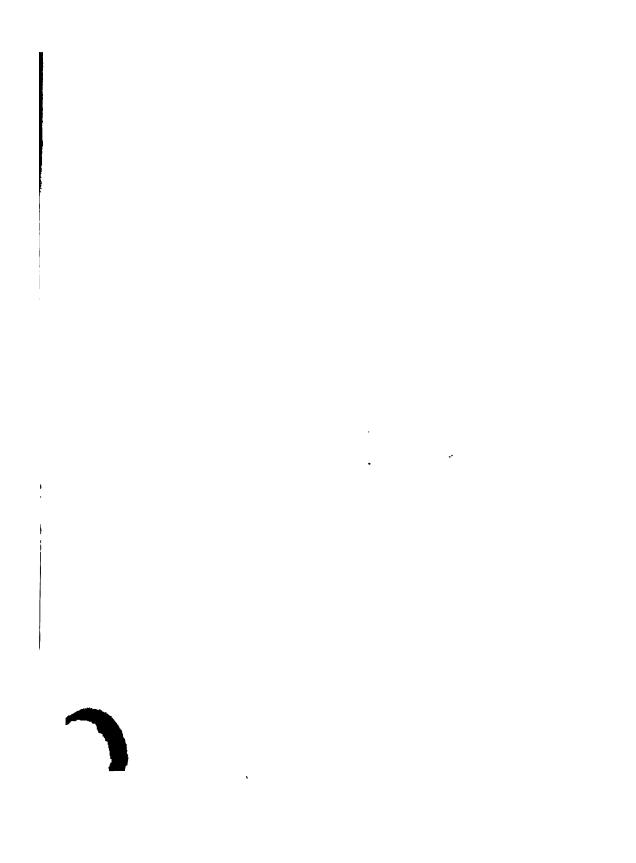
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